IT OCCURRED TO ME

By

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TO DORIS
best of sisters

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CHAPTER I

A Child's Mind

OUR NURSE was of the old school. She sang, told stories, and made up verses which she inscribed on our nursery table. The scrubbed deal surface took the ink well. At last there was hardly a square inch between the poems.

There was a jolly high-fenced garden surrounding our house. At one end of it a built-up rocky border abutted on a thick hedge behind which a romantic wild-looking stretch of long grass sloped steeply down to an unseen railway line. Each of us five children owned and tended a strip of this border.

When the horses were no longer appreciated, their stables were converted into a gymnasium for the elder brothers and sisters, and the harness-room into a dark-room for photography. "Snapshot" cameras had just arrived. Ours was called a Zoka; Kodaks followed. The potting-shed was fitted up as a kitchen for the family to experiment in. Beyond this was a sloping lawn and reliable-looking cedars, and at the bottom a little ivy-covered gate that always smelt of tar. This led out to the road, across which was another gate, high and solid, also tarred. But this one never smelled, or looked sticky and black. It had to be unlocked and then came Paradise. Here was a tennis lawn, a bowling-green, a summer-house, a very high swing, and surely the solidest seesaw in the world. Father had an old boat brought from the Docks for us. In the long grass, well away from the tennis-players, it was carefully set up so that it rocked when we wanted it to. We invited people to come for a sail, those addicted to seasickness had to be landed. We graciously obliged them, feeling ourselves efficient and seasoned mariners. This extra garden was only unlocked on Saturdays, or for parties.

Indoors the house was good for hide-and-seek. But that game used to fill me with terror. To crouch in the dark and hear stealthy footsteps padding round, to run at top speed to evade a pursuer, made my heart

beat too hard for pleasure. Running away has always seemed to call for great courage. It's the thing behind one that is terrifying. Our house was frightening in the dark. There were odd doors on dark landings that had to be passed when one went downstairs or up. The dark paint, the dim light, the grandfather clock, and the large and sombre furniture seemed to invite burglars. Once the hall was reached, all was well. There stood a smiling lady in white marble on a black pedestal. Later on I realized that she simpered.

The self-assured grown-ups meant well, of course. They were tireless, thoughtful, and gentle. Mother, knowing that fear of punishment might produce the habit of lying, took pains to impress on us that we need never be afraid to tell her when we'd done anything wrong, or broken or lost anything; she would never be angry. All we had to do was to own up, and all would be well. This excellent arrangement suited everyone but me. Unfortunately I could never forget any of my peccadillos, and I hated telling the silly things. Yet I knew it wasn't fair to ignore my half of the bargain. They were indeed a burden to me. Sometimes I would let them accumulate, instead of going to Mother straightway. When I was quite weighted down by their load I would get them off my chest and start again. One day the inevitable happened. I forgot one of the lists of my evil doings. It began to assume vast proportions. For months I was haunted by it. I remember the moment when, after a session of lonely reasoning, I came to the solemn conclusion that no relief from my situation could ever occur. The act of taking this trouble to Mother was unthinkable. Meanwhile, to protect myself from piling up a further accumulation of guilt, I put a strict discipline upon my tongue. I made no statement without adding to it the words, "perhaps," or "I think." The younger sister and brother, Doris and Kingsley, had a wonderful time making fun of me, and testing the thoroughness of my uncertainties. "What's the name of our house?" one of them would inquire, or "What's your name?" The loudest laughter of all greeted the answer, grimly given according to plan, when Doris, pointing to my new umbrella with a silver handle, asked, "Is that yours?"

Perhaps the climax was reached when I committed blasphemy. I was having the obligatory afternoon rest. My knees were cocked as high as

I could get them to make a seat for my doll Iris, my beloved companion of the rich brown curls, big eyes, and the ever-placid face. Suddenly I realized I was looking at her as a person might look at an idol. Supposing I sinned and worshipped her! I could never confess that! In a flash the thing was done. "Iris, forgive me my sins," were the words that came instantaneously to my mind. One's thoughts were more important than one's words, and therefore, in the nature of things, must be confessed, too. This parlous state, this place of continual torture, was unbearable. I knocked Iris down from her exalted position. She fell on her face on the counterpane. When Nurse called to say the rest-time was over, I trotted downstairs and out into the garden to play, pretending that nothing appalling had happened to me. The even tenor of one's ways must be continued, did the conscience rage never so fiercely.

There were always plenty of visitors being entertained at home. The parties were usually grown-up ones, for my four stepsisters and brothers were ten to twenty years older than I. People "came over for the day," a desolating habit of the last century. Just before the guests arrived for a Christmas party one year, I came downstairs alone into the dining-room, where a drugget had been nailed over the carpet for dancing. There were lots of mirrors. No one was about. I started dancing to myself. I tripped and turned. I leapt and spun. I got out of breath, more and more thrilled. This was fairyland, so long as no one came and found me at it. That would be shameful. Then a kindly servant came in, smiling at my happiness. This was mortifying enough to put an end to care-free solo dancing for many a long year.

On Sundays we all started chanting at an early hour in different keys from whichever quarter of the house we might be sleeping in, "Time to bring round, Papa." The choric demand grew more and more insistent until Father appeared in his Jaeger dressing-gown, and handed out to everyone whatever dainty edible Mother had bought the previous day for this ceremony. After putting on clean clothes and a starched pinafore that tickled one's neck, a breakfast of kidneys and bacon was absorbed. Then everyone had to contribute a text out of the Bible, all of which had to be copied out by one or other of us younger ones into a big leather-covered book with pages of blue, green, buff, and, my

childhood's favourite colour, a super-sickly pink. Meanwhile, one of us went round with the collecting-box, shaped like a book, for the Bible Society; afterwards more pennies and halfpennies were solicited for the "Poor box." Going out *en famille* to chapel must have meant misery for Mother. All of us were made to walk in front and be critically examined by Father, who not only was particular about shoes and gloves, but liked hair to be brushed straight back from the brow. If our Sunday clothes were not according to his taste, he made incisive remarks. We filled two pews at chapel. The lady who sat in front of me had luscious cherries in her hat. I liked the children's address, but as the grown-up sermon meandered on I was regularly overcome with misery and had to be led out. I vowed my discomfort was due to clean starched clothes. My elder sisters said it was kidney and bacon-fat on top of "bringing-round." This verbal phrase was used as a noun in our home.

Leytonstone was a place of green fields when my parents settled there. It is now ugly and indistinguishable from the rest of the long, straight, level road that starts at Charing Cross, runs through the East End, deposits one at Leytonstone, where Bushwood marks the dusty, straggly beginning of Epping Forest. It is like the Uxbridge Road that

> "goes streaming out to meet the cleanly wild.
> It pours the city's dim desires towards the undefiled."[1]

It passes through Whitechapel, through Mile End, through Bow and Stratford, immortalized by Chaucer in his Prologue. He describes the Prioress who "spoke the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe," whose genteel tastes were such that her strongest oath was "By Saint Alloy," and her habit was always to wipe the common cup with her kerchief before and after drinking.

The railway route lay through this unsalubrious neighbourhood of East London. Whenever we went "up West" for a party, a pantomime, or for shopping, we would close up the windows of the carriage with a bang and cover our noses to protect ourselves from the foul smell

[1] "The Uxbridge Road," by Evelyn Underhill; published in *Immanence* by J. M. Dent & Co.

that pervaded the whole atmosphere of Bow. It came from the factories which produced sweet-scented soap out of bone manure. The West End enjoyed the pleasant perfumed delicacy. The East End perpetually reeked of its manufacture. Dwellers in Essex, like ourselves, habitually commiserated with each other over the fact that their railway line ran through this malodorous area.

One day our train was held up for a minute or so on this part of the route. I stared down at the rabbit-warren of unsavoury dwelling-houses, gardenless, sordid, leaking. Being an innocent of some eight summers, I could not believe they were human habitations. I turned to the only grown-up, the nurse who was taking us home after a party, "Do people live down there?" I inquired, pointing. Perhaps she had orders not to let any of us become unhappy; I don't know. Her reply is clear-sounding in my ears still: "Oh yes. Plenty of people live down there but you needn't worry about them. They don't mind it. They're not like you. They enjoy it."

On only one other occasion, a year or so later, do I remember considering the condition of the people. It was once more the sight and smell of this ugly bit of East London which prompted some forgotten query about the plight of the inhabitants. Once more a grown-up answered, promptly: "It's all right. They don't feel things the same way as we do. And even if they did, they've only got themselves to blame. They get drunk. That's why they're poor." One believes the grow-ups when one is under twelve.

We had an aged super-nurse who came in whenever our own beloved "Tannie" went out. She was tall, broad-backed, gentle, and reliable. Her name was Mrs. Smith, changed to something more familiar when some one overheard very young Kingsley say to her, as he gravely presented her with some cherries, "You muthn't thwallow the thtoneth, Mit, Mit, Mit." One Sunday night when she stooped down to retrieve some of my garments, she couldn't get up again. It must have been more frightening for her than for me, but that didn't occur to me at the moment.

One summer day we had been playing on the lawn. When it grew too hot, I sat down on a stool and buttonholed with brown darning wool the blankets for the new inlaid mahogany dolls' bed that Grand-

father, who loved using his tools, had made for us. My thoughts turned to a theological subject. I enjoyed singing hymns and knew a good many by heart. The lines of some of them stuck in my head, and eventually challenged my common sense. "Why should we praise God? Why admire Him? More definite still, why love Him? It isn't very noble to send one's son to do a difficult and painful thing." Sitting in the sun facing this question made me hotter than ever. After pondering for some time, I fastened the darning-needle in the blanket edge and wandered indoors. No one was about. The dining-room was an aloof sort of place, and cool, too. I pulled out one of the heavy oak chairs and sat down, leaning my head on my hand and my elbow on the table. I followed out the argument as honestly as I could, for one mustn't pretend, one mustn't say anything one doesn't mean. Could I love Jesus? Yes, easily. He was fine. Could I love God? I was very sad to say I could not, unless the hymns were untrue when they talked about punishment and justice and mercy and blood. Perhaps they were. Just then Mit, Mit, Mit ambled into the room, her broad countenance registering surprise at finding a little girl sitting alone in the house at midday. With characteristic kindliness she only murmured sympathetically about the heat and wouldn't I like some lemonade? I would have been ashamed to let anyone know what I'd been thinking, so I accepted the offer with pleasure. I never had any further trouble about the love of God, so I rather think my father's talks to us on Sundays must have begun to have some effect on me. He was a passionate iconoclast of the old legalisms.

The preparatory school we all went to was co-educational, advanced even for these days. We were encouraged to think. The Principal's wife, Mrs. T. B. Martin, was a vegetarian, and a number of us caught the habit from her and have kept to it.

On our walk to school and back, on excursions and picnics in the summer holidays, we were rarely our ordinary selves. One or other of our "talking games" was always in progress. Doris, Kingsley, and I each had our part in a perpetual play wherein we were all grown-ups and gloriously confident and capable, but it was when Kathleen was with us that the impersonations became heroic. She was King Harold, the rest of us his brothers, brought up to date. We conversed inter-

minably in modern English and didn't notice a tree, flower, bird, or view. We were in another world. During the long hours in which a child lies in bed awake on light summer mornings and evenings, I always impersonated the Duke of Wellington or some other soldier, ancient or mediæval. I would talk to myself in noble language, reënacting wonderful exploits. Swords and dirks decorated the walls of my room. I trained my hand to leap to my sword-hilt at a second's notice.

Later on, when I discovered one could be quite as romantic about contemporary history, I became a militarist patriot. On my bookshelf, next to the G. A. Henty books, were ensconced the *Life of Lord Roberts*, the history of Lord Kitchener avenging General Gordon in Khartoum, the account of the recent campaign of Baden-Powell among the Ashantis, the bloody story of the Soudan War. I bought a scrap book, covered it with khaki, and collected pictures displaying British prowess and native infidelity—any sort of native.

I was about twelve when a great treat was to be enjoyed by one of us children. Prince George,[1] the Duke of York, was coming with his wife to open the new Blackwall Tunnel. Mother and Father eventually decided that I should be the one to accompany them as they drove up to witness Their Royal Highnesses' arrival. Dressed in Sunday clothes, I was perched rather precariously on the little extra seat of the victoria, between its black-painted iron railing to which one clung when sharp corners were turned or when the wheel got caught in a tram line and had to be jerked out. At first the drive was jolly, but soon we emerged into questionable streets. The houses grew squatter, less dignified, sinister. The roads filled with people who shouted for no apparent reason, waved paper hats and blew out ticklers. They had red faces and loud voices. They laughed a lot. With dismay I realized we had driven into the heart of the East End, that rabbit-warren that years previously I had looked down into with such horror from the secure vantage-ground of a first-class railway carriage. My parents, however, appeared completely at their ease and even gave orders to the coachman to draw up at the curb, whence a good view of the Duke and Duchess would be obtained. I can still feel the peculiar creak and crackle of white silk gloves suddenly drawn tight as I gripped the railing to control my

[1] Afterwards King George V.

fear. Etiquette forbade that I should betray it to my father and mother. How long should we have to wait for this Duke? Who cared about seeing him or any other royalty compared with the blessed security of home? I was in the midst of a sea of alien faces, creatures who cared nothing for me. I was bereft of all shelter and security, respect and consideration. How could any one call this a treat? Tense and wretched, I waited, not for the Duke to come but for him to go. As at last we drove away, I gave by rote the customary response to the query, "Well, my dear, and how did you like that?" But the thought flashed into my mind, "And there are some women who live as missionaries among these awful East Enders. What a fate!" I promptly put the whole horrible idea out of my head.

I played the piano a good deal and read a lot. Mother read the *Jungle Book* to us while we made up a good red fire in the old-fashioned grate and baked chestnuts. *The Princess and the Goblins* and *The Princess and Curdie* by George Macdonald were our favourite books. *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* seemed to amuse the grown-ups more than it did me. I enjoyed it, of course, but was so much a part of it that it proved frightening. The Red Queen was intimidating, and when Alice kept growing inside a locked room so that soon there wasn't enough room for her, my habitually forethoughtful mind leapt to the agony of torture she was going to suffer a little later on. My own particular joy was the *Wagner Story Book*. The impression these stories made was deepened because of a gleaming white-and-gold helmet some one had given me. I used to gaze into the mirror, trying to behold Brünnhilde, carefully arranging my hair so that it fell straight down on each side of my face.

Mother had set her heart on my going to Saint Leonard's School at Saint Andrews, famous for its students, its independent-spirited headmistress, and its long tradition of freedom and healthy living. She imbued me with her enthusiasm, and as the elder sisters and brothers championed our cause, Father had to give way to our combined determination. To him it was just plain folly sending a child away from a good home. And as for that long journey up to the bleak east coast of Scotland! He was devoted, however, to our old family doctor, who declared, after a talk with mother, that it would "do me good to get

some Aberdeen granite into my system." We kept silent about the geographical position of St. Andrews in an adjacent county, well to the south of Aberdeen.

The charms of St. Andrews have been sung in major and minor keys. None can do it full justice. The school is fortunate in its broad acres of playing-fields, its solid-looking schoolhouses, its position by the turbulent North Sea. It is enclosed by a high grey wall much of which dates back to the days when Scottish history was in the making. We could climb up into the ivy-covered towers and set our fancy free, down through the centuries or half across the world. On the way from school to city, we passed through narrow high-walled streets overhung with pointed arches where plants had found rootage, where the sky became more intimate and friendly because it was cut into a great blue triangle, very bright against the soft grey of old stone. The tower of St. Regulus rose out of the distance wherever one roamed, however thick the sea mist might be. There stands enough of the ruined cathedral to make one always aware of the past. To peer down into the bottle-dungeon cut deep into the earth, with no outlet save its narrow neck, enlarged one's imagination.

I was fortunate in my house. I was in "the Gnats," formidable champions on the cricket and lacrosse fields, blessed in their house-mistress, Alice de-Natorp, a white-haired aristocrat of Austrian birth in whose tiny stature dignity became a thing to wonder at. Her piercing blue eyes might intimidate, especially when she was absent-mindedly gazing at one and thinking about something else, but humour and kindliness constituted their usual expression. She was intensely appreciative of her twenty-eight girls and encouraged us to think for ourselves. Her interests were wide. Almost from the school's foundation she had been teaching girls to play the piano. Every evening at half past eight, dressed in our second best, we would take our crochet, embroidery, or knitting into her drawing-room and she would read aloud, *Pride and Prejudice, Cranford, Romola,* and *The Moonstone*, rolling every R in continental style and occasionally stopping short in order to find out what had been happening in the story; she could read with perfect intonation in complete absence of mind.

I spent an hour and a half a day practising at the piano. My teacher,

Miss Hime, had studied under Leschititsky. One supremely important thing I learned from her. I could not get the phrasing right of one of the themes in a Beethoven Sonata. Again and again I played it to her, always unconvincingly, lamely, meaninglessly. At last she swept my hands off the piano.

"Don't try it again," she said. "Forget what I've been telling you to do. Keep quiet a second or two, then sing it. Don't be afraid. It's bound to come out rightly phrased if you trust yourself. The music's in you. Remember that." And out it came, sure enough.

A Scottish background is particularly enriching for English girls. We met people who actually believed in ghosts. We used to experience a fascinating horror on that top floor of Bishopshall West, from which our window looked down on the narrow winding street along which Archbishop Sharpe's ghostly coach and six drove every 31st of October, taking his shadowy person out to the inn where centuries ago at midnight he met his death.

Doris and I went to the United Presbyterian Church on Sunday mornings, and the Episcopal Church in the evenings. Once a special service was planned and prepared for by a nation-wide week of prayer. Every congregation was to concentrate on seeking means for uniting various branches of the universal church. This seemed to me wholly desirable and only common sense. When the day arrived, we listened to a stirring sermon. I entered into the preacher's argument eagerly, perhaps specially so because I was outside the Episcopal Church. With the climax came an appeal to each of us to pray and work for this great cause. Then anti-climax! We were not to rest until all dissenters had become Episcopalians.

The only other sermon I remember was at the beginning of the Boer War. The vicar compared the merits of peace and war. He quoted so much from Tennyson's *Maud* that to one of his congregation at least he made war sound very much nobler. But I was already biased towards things military. I was so moved by his eloquence that a year or so later when the time-honoured essay topics were set by the Oxford and Cambridge Joint Examination Board, I chose the "Relative Advantages Accruing from Peace and War," reproduced many of his arguments, and gained a satisfactory pass.

Throughout the Boer War I acquired various little medals displaying the heads of generals and asserting the nation's gratitude towards our fighting-men. I strung them on the bit of black silk cord that held the watch tucked into my Petersham waist-belt. During the holidays I gathered that my married sister Jen and her husband, George Hardy, were tainted with pro-Boer sympathies. I carefully refrained from listening to any of their arguments, putting them down to some strange mental aberration.

George Hardy was the sort of genius whom children feel is their equal. On the long walks one took with him conversation was always easy, stimulating. He and Jen encouraged us to think for ourselves. I remember one occasion in my 'teens when Jen asked me a question about school. Words tumbled over each other excitedly. But the descriptive sentences never seemed to get finished. They ended exclamatorily with an oft-repeated, "Oh, I can't explain, but . . ." Presently she interrupted. "Now, Muriel, don't say that any more. You can explain perfectly well, just as anybody else can. Try it again."

I spent most of my precious ten terms at school studying Latin and Greek, although I was not and never shall be proficient in any language except occasionally my own. If only I had learned a little European history as well, or studied more than the six principal plays of Shakspere! Even after leaving school, I went on studying Tacitus and Plato, until at length I woke to the fact that there were other things to do. The grinding away at Latin and Greek roots was, of course, invaluable. Poor as was my scholarship, I was properly impressed by Socrates' sanctified common sense.

"I am not wiser than you Athenians except in this one thing. You know nothing and I know nothing. But, unlike you, I know that I know nothing."

CHAPTER II

A Young Lady at Large

I LEFT school when I was eighteen. I had been head of the house for a term. There had been talk of Cambridge, but both elder sisters had married young, my parents had moved into the country, close to Epping Forest, and my father was nearing seventy. I wasn't really eager to go on trying to read Greek plays and translating good Latin into bad English. The prospect of spending the rest of the winter abroad charmed me. Mother and Father were easy people to get on with, quite apart from one's blood relationship, and they introduced me to their favourite haunts in Mentone, Bordighera, San Remo, Rome, Florence, and the Italian lakes. Italy is a grand place for any one trained in imaginative reconstruction by "talking games."

After ten weeks I came home to be a young lady at large. I played tennis, danced, took piano and singing lessons, visited school friends, helped Father while away his hours of leisure—he was missing business badly—did the housekeeping which I hated, took charge of a class of boys in the Sunday school, and spent hours a day sitting at the piano. Sometimes I played for my own pleasure. At other times I accompanied Mother's, Doris', Kingsley's, and my own songs, Kingsley's violin, one married sister's violin, and the other's 'cello. Kingsley was the sort of brother everyone wants, and he was rich in natural gifts. Doris, he, and I had bedrooms with communicating doors. How satisfying is the memory of those well-worn jokes and stories with which we used to regale each other. We told each other some home truths, too.

I used to feel horribly afraid for Kingsley, the last child after four girls, lest when he grew up he should take to drink, fall into bad company, or lose touch with God. A sense of responsibility for him kept me worrying. When he was getting ready for Cambridge I imagined all sorts of pitfalls. Eventually I was delivered from my anxiety by discovering Tolstoi. In somebody else's house I found an old primly-bound volume of his *The Kingdom of Heaven Is Within You.* It

changed the very quality of life for me. A long chapter was devoted to the words of Jesus, "Judge not." As I eagerly devoured it, my burden of care-fraught ideas dropped from me. I saw that so long as Kingsley did what he thought right, I could honour him and enjoy him as much as ever. Another chapter on "Be Not Anxious" determined me to ignore once and for all those conventions and solicitudes, those pretences and fears, that cause so much friction. Another chapter tipped me right over into pacifism. That was a pretty swift transition for such an absurdly militarist young woman, but once your eyes get opened to pacifism, you can't shut them again. Once you see it, you can't unsee it. You may bitterly regret the fact that you happen to be one of the tiny minority of the human race who have caught this angle of vision, but you can't help it.

Meanwhile I was also discovering my own father. I hadn't realized how many battles he must have fought to preserve his cherished belief in the Fatherhood of God. We took it for granted. How insensitive, inartistic, unscientific, and ungracious it is to take anything for granted! If Father had not taken a bold stand nearly seventy years ago and refused to be intimidated by virtual excommunication, we might have been cowering at the thought of eternal punishment, obsessed with the thought of hell fire, or in reaction against such atrocities turning in revolt against Christ Himself.

Father had twinkling eyes; he was short, held himself well, had a massive brow, took good care of his hair, beard, and whiskers, saw the funny side of things, and, like Mr. Gandhi, particularly enjoyed a joke on himself.

He wrote each of us every week while we were at school. His last paragraph was always pious. Only later on did we realize that it was probably as much disciplinary effort for him to include it as for us to read it. Christianity meant everything to him, but his was an impatient nature and he grew easily irritated with church meetings, conferences, sermons, in fact with almost every part of the organization of a church. Yet his dearest friends were ministers. He liked little country churches and those which were frequented by working-people.

During the many hours each week when we strolled about the village together, he would stop at the slightest provocation and stand in

characteristic attitude, leaning on his stick, feet well apart, gazing intently at navvies digging a trench or a joiner putting window frames into a half-built house. At first I used to be embarrassed. Nineteen does not easily fit into the pattern of life that suits sixty-eight. I liked walking fast and hated standing about. But "going for a walk with Father" was part of the accepted order of things, and nineteenth-century training conditioned one to recognize that feelings were of no account. Soon I discovered his art of story-telling; the old days at the beginning of the century came to life for me.

He was born in 1836. His grandfather, an old soldier, used to send him out for a pennyworth of brandy balls, great balls of black toffee which had to be smashed with a poker before Father could eat them. The old man would crunch them with his teeth. He had served in the Napoleonic wars, quite unwillingly. The press gang used to carry off any likely-looking fellow they met. He was on his way home from work and already in sight of the house when the officers seized him. The children playing in the street set up a shout, running to him and trying to drag him away from his captors. His wife heard the noise and ran up, too, imploring his release. It was of no avail. A workman's wage precludes much saving, and very soon the family had to leave its home and take a single room. Neither relief nor separation allowance was provided. The mother tried to find regular work, but was unsuccessful. Everything was sold for food. They moved again, this time into an attic. From its small window, they could look down on a market garden at the back of the house. Plenty of good food there! One of them would creep down under cover of darkness so that none should know their need and collect cabbage leaves, the outside leaves thrown away as refuse. It made soup next day.

My grandfather was eight years old when he found a bricklayer willing to employ him. Overjoyed, he set out each morning very early to climb up ladders with a load of bricks and mortar. The hours were long and it was a bitter-cold winter. The boy's feet were covered with chilblains. The lime worked its way through his boots and made the inflammation worse. But he kept the whole family from starvation.

Time dragged on. No letter came from the war zone: Rowland Hill had not yet given the country a reliable postal system, nor had Sir

Robert Peel set up the police force that keeps his name forever on our tongues. Early one Sunday morning when hope was nearly gone, the watchman's voice from the street below awakened them. There was a loud hammering on the street door. "Does Mrs. Lester live here?" The people downstairs responded to the voice of authority. While the little family upstairs huddled together in the doorway of their garret, a bronzed and bearded stranger strode up the stairs, followed by a porter carrying a heavy, foreign-looking sea chest on his shoulder. The stranger stared at them. His own family seemed to him as alien in their wretchedness and weakness as he appeared to them. Then came joyful greetings. There was much to tell. Horrified at their forlorn plight, he asked what they had been eating. When was their last good meal? They couldn't remember. Well! That day's dinner should be one to remember forever. He'd send out to a cookshop for it. What would they have? Each child named a different dish. All right, no one should be disappointed. At dinner-time two of them went out with money and brought back a generous helping of each chosen dish to the family sitting round the table anticipating the feast. But to their amazement, nobody could eat.

Ten years later the young breadwinner of the family was having a bad time. He got religion. This infuriated his father. A specially bitter brand of cynicism is to be found in men forced to kill their fellows in the name of God, king, and country, and then made to shine their buttons and whiten their belts with peculiar care every Sunday in order to attend divine service. The young convert had to lock himself into the lavatory to say his prayers. The strength and fellowship and joy he found in the chapel was worth being persecuted for.

He married young and his wife must have been charming, to judge from the portrait on my wall. They had ten children, healthy, lively, and mostly long-lived. Grandpa was a carpenter in a big firm at the docks. His wages were small. Bread in the Corn Law days was so dear that when Father, as the eldest boy, was sent out to buy a quartern loaf, he received only a halfpenny change out of the shilling he paid. I believe Grandpa invented the family bath for East London families; for certain it is that after making a rough drawing and doing a little calculation, he presented himself before the head of his firm and asked

if he might take from a pile of waste lumber certain specified lengths of board. There was so much self-possession and dignity in the young workman's attitude that the employer, who was one of the old school, paternal and interested in all his people, inquired, after granting the request, what he contemplated making. Grandpa gladly showed him the plans for the family bath, which apparently proved a success.

His eldest son was my father. His education started at a dame's school which cost a penny or two a week. If any child arrived late, all the rest stood up and sang a verse at him:

"Oh, you have not washed,
 Nor you have not done your hair
Are you not quite ashamed?
 What a figure, I declare!"

The tune fits the words admirably.

With baths and schooling and a happy, jolly home life there went religious instruction. The hymn-books of the day included such hymns as:

There is a dreadful hell
 Of everlasting pains,
Where sinners do with devils dwell
 In torments and in chains.

This was sung with gusto and seemed to do no harm. It was the personal instruction, alas! that made the undeniable impression. As a little boy, Father was told to put his finger on a bar of the kitchen grate when the fire was burning merrily. As he drew it away, smarting and red, his father said: "See how that hurts! Now, my boy, imagine what it would be like for your whole body, not just a little finger, to be in a fire like that, not for a second, but for ever and ever." The thunder, too, was explained to him as the voice of God. Until he was nearly ninety, Father retained some vestige of morbidity, recognized by his conscious mind as completely irrational, but haunting him on occasion.

It was in reaction against this blasphemous notion of God that he set himself, early in life, to demonstrate by pen and action that God's

essence was, as Jesus said, love. He gave minute attention to the Bible stories he told us children every Sunday afternoon. He would show us how to act them out with him, hold us spellbound while the bunch of big grapes that the spies brought back from Palestine was slung onto his walking stick and precariously balanced on the shoulders of two of us. Of course, there was no actual weight attached, but we wilted and strained with bent shoulders as we carried the precious burden from one side to the other of the well-carpeted Victorian drawing-room.

Another means of education invented for us by Father was "Dreaming." While we were seeking comfortable positions on the floor, on the arm of his chair, on his knees, he would lean back his head and shut his eyes. We kept very still, eager and expectant. After a little he would begin describing in short exclamatory sentences what he saw in his sleep. "What a big river! Oh, those look good strong bulrushes. I'd like to pick some. Why, there is some one picking them! No, she isn't. She's staring at something. Whatever can it be? She does look interesting. Oh! No wonder! A princess. . . ." At the end of the dream he would wake up gradually, rubbing his eyes. "Hullo! What are you all doing here?" he'd say. This feigned ignorance was necessary in order to get the whole story repeated to him by our communal efforts.

As we grew older, he composed new stories for us. One was called "Pass It On." It was about a jolly boy called Bobby. Exciting things kept happening to him. We became so insistent for more of his adventures that Father feared his inventive faculty might give out. Finally, Mother intervened and summarily informed us that "Pass It On" was finished and we mustn't ever ask for any more. Mother never consciously took part in our religious upbringing. "I can't talk. I can only do things," was her plea, quite unconscious of the terrific claim and the abysmal snub to Father's efforts her words implied.

Despite fire, thunder, and hell, Father admired Grandpa immensely. But he adored his mother. As her big family grew up, went to work, and developed strong personalities, tastes, and temperaments, her phrase was, "Always keep things pleasant, my dear." She apparently managed it, too, Father helping her. One of the boys, Bill, developed

a streak of self-pity in his early adolescence. Perhaps it was the only way he could claim any attention; perhaps early malnutrition had affected him. At any rate, he had the habit of threatening to jump into the near-by canal. His brothers and sisters only laughed at him, but when Father noticed that his mother found the threat irksome, he decided to take his brother in hand. Bill sauntered home one afternoon, set himself down in the kitchen, started grouching to his mother about his bad luck, and suggested once again the quickest way out of it all. He didn't know his eldest brother was at home. When Father came in and cheerfully agreed about the suitability of death by drowning, Bill was taken aback. Father gave him no time to demur, but seized him by the collar, ran him out of the house and down the road to the canal. Running so much faster than was his custom, Bill hadn't much breath to shout with. Besides, Father was too busy assuring him of his willingness to coöperate to hear his cry. Only on the brink of the canal bank was the victim halted. He had learned his lesson.

Father started work when he was twelve. He was apprenticed to Scott Russell & Son, a shipbuilding firm. I've only remembered odd phrases, such as "working in the mould left," "studying draughtsmanship," "laying off the *Great Eastern*."[1] He secreted candles in order to work in his bedroom at night. To keep the big sheet of drawing-paper intact before leaving the docks, he would wrap it round his body, fasten his coat over it, and walk home with it uncrumpled. He had a long way to walk.

After serving his time, he and his father set up a little business together. It went well. Father married. Within the year the business was burnt down. By some error of Grandpa's, the last insurance premium had been unpaid. They had nothing left. Days of darkness followed, with despair just round the corner, teasing and taunting, but so far held at bay only by their faith.

One of the big shipping men driving up to the docks in his dog-cart, passed Father in the street. Something in the young man's attitude must have arrested his attention before he overtook him. He reined in his horse and waited for his approach.

[1] The ship that laid the first cable across the Atlantic.

After asking him a leading question or two, he said, "How much would you need to start again?"

"Three or four hundred pounds," answered Father.

"Jump up beside me," said this fairy godfather.

Astounded, Father obeyed. The dog-cart stopped at the bank. Soon he was standing in the manager's private room and hearing his benefactor say, "Good morning. Will you please look at this young man and tell me if I am right in thinking I can put complete confidence in him?"

The manager took his time and said, "Yes, sir, I think you can."

"Then let him draw upon my account, Mr. Manager, up to four hundred pounds, and if he wants more later on, let him have it."

With these words the good man shook hands with Father, who went once more about his business, set it up on a firmer foundation with greater confidence in himself, in God, and in life. Although he drew on the bank to the extent of a thousand pounds, he was soon able to repay the whole loan.

As the firm's business grew, men used to like to work there. Conditions and rates of pay were pretty good.

West Ham changed completely during Father's lifetime from a lonely country place to the over-populated, sordid looking area one finds today. Social services, police courts, and educational facilities grew at a great pace. Father became overseer, magistrate, and chairman of the school board soon after it was set up in 1870. On a certain night during one of the exciting elections of those days when feeling was running high, he was billed to speak at a big hall. But when the day came, he was lying in bed, his voice inaudible through strain. Should he go to the meeting or not? A telegram arrived anonymously, "We're going to give you hell tonight." Father's spirits rose. He sent for the doctor and told him at any cost to put his throat in speaking order. By working at it all day he was able to emerge from the cab at the Town Hall and enjoy a glorious evening.

CHAPTER III

Bow

"WOULD you like to come to a party in the East End?" inquired a friend one day. "The factory girls' club in Bow is celebrating next week. I'll take you along if you like."

The invitation seemed to promise a pleasant diversion, and I accepted. I had never come into contact with working-people except as they served me—bus-conductors, porters, cooks, and gardeners. Like J. M. Barrie's elderly artist in *A Kiss for Cinderella*, who had cherished throughout his life a longing to see a policeman minus a helmet, a little uncertain whether that dignified appendage was, in fact, removable, I looked forward to the new sensation of meeting face to face, as separate personalities, the people who produced the cakes of soap, the boxes of matches, the chocolates, and the water-proof coats we all accepted as a matter of course.

As we threaded our way down narrow turnings and through murky streets, ill lit by occasional gas lamps, I reminded myself that this was the famous East End, in the public eye the disreputable haunt of thieves, drunks, and hooligans, the area I had gazed upon with so much distress as a child when the Great Eastern Railway train halted on its otherwise express run from London to my home.

The party marked an epoch for me. These girls, who danced with me, entertained me, made conversation to set me at my ease and plied me with refreshments, were just like myself; some of them, the same age, nineteen years old. Yet how experienced they seemed! How assured! What natural dignity! They were much more mature and more independent than I. Why were some of them pale, others thin, with bent shoulders? Compared with them, I was a pampered, sheltered, ignorant idler. Why should they go on working, producing pleasure and ease for such as I? For the previous five years, since they and I were fourteen, why had our lot been so different? For.

exactly that period I had been growing strong as a horse at an expensive and delightful boarding-school, while they had been bound to a machine for ten and often for eleven hours a day. Was this God's will? If so, God was certainly not admirable.

I came up to Bow next week, and the next and the next. I was avid to find out about these people, what their ideas were, how they felt about things. I longed to be asked into their homes and treated like one of themselves for a time. At length a dear old woman in a long-skirted black dress with a white crocheted collar told her daughter to "bring the new young lady in for a nice cup of cocoa before she sets out on that long journey to Loughton, being as 'ow this 'ouse is close to the club and it's that cold in them trains."

Her daughter, Beattie, rather diffidently gave me this message. She was employed at Berger's starch works, aged nearly forty, shoulders bent, her little eyes almost invisible behind powerfully magnifying spectacles, her bronchitic wheezing often an actual rattle in her throat. Tall and thin, she had no beauty of feature or garment to make her desirable; but like Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan "there was something about her." How can I fitly praise her? She had delicate consideration for others, integrity, fineness of judgment, courage. Her criterions were actually, not just theoretically, Christian.

Of course I didn't know all this when I started off with her that night, gleefully climbing the flight of stone steps that adorned the façade of her house. She didn't knock, but leaned over the railing, craned her neck forward over the area below, and called to the inmates of the basement. From behind its illuminated window there came an answering signal; a click sounded close to our ears and the door opened. "That bit of string of Mother's saves her old legs," explained Beattie as she turned up the gas-jet in the narrow passage cluttered with bicycles and perambulator. At the far end was a dark winding stairway. Mrs. Pryke stood at the foot of it, holding a lamp. She led me through the scullery into the gayest and cosiest of rooms. Introductions were effected.

So this was the typical workman's home, the core of our national life, the heart of the community wherein before their birth the destiny of

seventy per cent of the people of Britain is shaped. I will try to list its essential qualities.

It must always be warm. At first one thinks the heat from the fire and the shut windows will make the atmosphere oppressive, but it doesn't.

It must always be light, as brightly lit as the householder can manage to afford.

It must be colourful. On the dresser, row upon row of gleaming cups, saucers, and dishes reflect the light. China ornaments decorate the mantelshelf. An overmantel or hanging bracket on the wall is covered with bright-hued crinkly paper, folded and frilled into complicated patterns.

It is always crowded. The rooms are too small for the people who live therein. Luckily the whole family never has to sit down for meals at the same time, except for Sunday dinner. And that is a semi-sacred rite. Here is a triumph of home economics not only in marketing, cooking, and serving, but in the disposal of human bodies. A chest of drawers gets a new significance when one considers it as the repository of the worldly possessions of seven people. Their clothes, prized letters, photos, and treasures of a lifetime must be housed in five drawers and an old box or two.

It is a triumph of efficiency, personal, not mechanized. The kitchen sink is of metal, innocent of enamel. It performs many different functions, each needing special adjuncts. Dishwashing apparatus must be stowed away somewhere, and a shelf provided for shaving-tackle, for the family comb (private ones are kept in the pocket), and the two and a half square inch of unframed mirror; nails must be there for toothbrushes and a string for face flannels and towel to hang on as there is no other place in the house for ablutions; mathematical precision is necessary to get these gadgets utilized without friction, so that each member of the family can remain self-respecting and of even temper.

I was sorry when, my huge cup of cocoa emptied, I had to go to the train. Lodgers, married daughter, son-in-law, and three children had all helped Mrs. Pryke and Beattie entertain me.

This visit made me an addict. I set to work to learn the etiquette

of the neighbourhood, its outlook, its syntax and the secret of its perfect; unhurried manners. I started coming to the club regularly. I read aloud and told stories, prepared and served penny teas, accompanied (inevitably) for the singing class, and otherwise began to serve my apprenticeship. As soon as my sister Doris left school she joined the club, too, and enjoyed it even more than I did. The girls recognized in her humour a quality which won her the reputation of being a "dry comic."

I learned a good deal about home life in Bow during the week's holiday that the club arranged every Whitsun for its members. Year after year our common stock of traditions, group photographs, and other jokes increased. Most of our talking was done on our walks. Pale-faced Hannah told of her father—how frightened she was of him when he was in drink; how her mother hid her away in a cupboard, but "some'ow the old man always knew, sort of extra sense or something. He'd break out in prespiration and shiver and vow there was some one about that 'e couldn't see. Not 'arf queer!" I heard that the best way you could help an unemployed man was to give him a penny. Then he could go and sit in a public house with a glass of beer, and "as likely as not 'e'd get talking with a foreman or a chap who could speak up for 'im and find 'im a job. The girls explained to me how it often happens that men start talking about God when they're drunk. "Truth comes out in liquor. Men who'd never think of talking religious when they're sober can't 'elp it when the drink's in 'em. It's a pity men make such beasts of theirselves, but if you come to think of it, they must go somewhere in the evenings. There ain't nowhere else except the pubs. People don't go in because they're thirsty, but because there's good company to be found in them places. There's friendly words and no stiff ways; no fuss either, and no nagging. There's generally plenty of noise, what with so many people talking and the potman drawing the drinks, an' all, so you don't hear yourself speak; you don't even notice your boots squeaking: it's all free and easy and you don't never feel awkward in a pub."

I was told of a woman who died of new ammonia and crushing of the brain; of a man who fell out of a train so had to have a "port examination"; of another who lost his conscience a couple of hours

before he died. My language too was tested and found wanting. Several quite innocent words that I used freely proved to have an extremely unpleasant significance in Bow.

The Bow phrase, "I don't mind if I do," is singularly exasperating to middle-class people. It seems an inadequate mode of accepting a much-desired invitation. At first my ignorant scorn led me to retort, "All right, if you aren't keen about coming to the theatre with me, I won't keep a place for you."

The look of pained amazement evoked by such a sally drove me to consider the derivation of the offending sentence. I found that this particular combination of words is reserved as an expression of the highest appreciation and delight of which a person is capable.

The course of justice is sometimes impeded by the magistrate's ignorance of working-class language. Once a workman stole a few shillings, was arrested, and pleaded in court his extreme poverty. The magistrate painstakingly inquired into his earning capacity and the family expenditure. The accused's wife was brought in to facilitate matters. She gave a meticulous account of what went towards rent, firing, light, and food each week. Then came an item marked "clubs." Being a thrifty housekeeper, she subscribed to three different ones. There is no cheaper way of procuring coal, boots, clothes, etc. The pound club is an indigenous institution of untold beneficence. If twenty neighbours pay a shilling a week each Saturday, one of them will be able to buy advantageously for cash down instead of patronizing the tally-man system, which often necessitates continuing weekly payments for clothes already worn out.

But to the magistrate's mind, clubs meant only one thing, pleasure, indulgence, relaxation. He proceeded to preach publicly to the workman on the folly and wickedness of extravagance, of living beyond one's means, of spending one-eighth of the weekly wage on reprehensible amusements. The astonished couple listened to the homily without a notion as to its meaning, and at its conclusion found themselves handed over to the court missionary to be reëducated. As this was ordered in lieu of imprisonment or fine, presumably they welcomed what seemed to them a lapse of sanity in high quarters. They

would have no trouble with the missionary, who knew his clientele and whose wife possibly belonged to a thrift club or two herself.

One morning I was told my turn had come to lead the evening prayers. I could think of no valid reason for refusing, but I didn't know how it was done. How could one be sure of remembering the things one wanted to say? Wouldn't the unaccustomed aloudness put one off? I asked the advice of the club leader. We worked out a technique. I was to go off alone and think out a prayer, put it into words, write it down, and then read it off the paper while we were all on our knees in the evening. It all sounded simple and straightforward. Yet I found, to my surprise when supper-time arrived, that I had no appetite. All day long the ordeal had been before me. But once the terrifying thing had been accomplished, there seemed to be an extra zest in ordinary affairs.

One afternoon we were straggling along a country lane, picking flowers, throwing a ball about, laughing and singing, when a man came rolling towards us. He was very drunk. We passed the word along to ignore him in the hope he would do the same by us. When with admirable self-control we had all passed him by without a word, he turned round, staring appreciatively albeit with an appraising eye. In a loud voice his opinion burst upon a surprised world:

"Well! If I woz to set up a little home, all on my own, I'd choose the one with the poppies in 'er 'at."

It was one of the nicest hats I ever had, even if it did earn me a new soubriquet, "The Drunkard's Choice."

It was a new experience for me to run up against suicide. Its frequent cause was indebtedness. To borrow ten shillings in some crisis, birth, death, marriage, or accident, is perhaps to put oneself in bondage for the rest of one's life. The rate of interest charge is often twopence on the shilling, payable weekly. It works out at about 850% per annum. Loans of this sort are usually negotiated in the bar of a public house. Many lenders insist on being treated to a drink at the beginning and at the end of a transaction, some whenever a repayment is made. The borrower is often urged to drink also, for courtesy's sake or for the good of the house. If the debtor cannot keep up the weekly payments, a further loan is urged upon him. One of the blessed

results of Lloyd George's Health Insurance Act was to lessen the occasions for borrowing. Illness and maternity are more or less provided for now.

Recently, public opinion was aroused and a new act passed to protect borrowers by limiting the rate of interest charged by registered money-lenders. A magistrate friend, a leading publicist, asked me subsequently if I were not delighted with its provisions. I shall never forget his sudden change of expression when I answered that it was not affecting a single one of my neighbours. They were still paying at the old rate. Their creditors are not registered. They lend without security. They cannot enforce their claims to repayment in any court of law. They have no need to. They know how to collect what is due to them without any such troublous processes. Their debtors prefer to pay. Otherwise they would be forfeiting their future chance of salvation when the next domestic crisis occurred. If the load of debt gets too heavy, the canal is conveniently near.

But the Thames Conservancy Police are reliable. One neighbour, desiring to die, was fished out of the water, taken to a hospital, and restored to consciousness. When she realized that she had to live, her burden of debt still intolerable, she lay quite still on her back, staring up at the ceiling, meditating. "It is a cruel world: better to leave it, but it won't let you; it's too cruel even for that." After a time she saw at the end of the ward the representative of public safety, the policeman obliged to keep watch over her; for suicide is a crime. This did not make life seem any more attractive. Day and night she lay there open-eyed, staring. A neighbour asked me to go to her. I made excuses. A little later, another friend suggested "casual like" the same visitation. I did not want the responsibility.

"No one has been in to see her yet," they gently urged. That sentence in Bow parlance means, "No clergyman, minister, or any one competent to put her mind at rest and help her face the consequences of her own act with courage and confidence has been to see her, and you ought to."

I proposed that a minister be asked to go, but they held me to their purpose. They were right, of course, and I had to go. Though I was so young, I was at any rate not a strange man, who, for all she knew,

might be spiritually akin to the burly policeman in his attitude towards crime. Our acquaintance with each other led to a change in the outlook of both of us.

One attempted suicide was caused by overcrowding. Picture a sensitive girl of eighteen having to share her parents' bedroom when the father is a masterful, selfish type of man, arrogant towards women, of overbearing will. Possibly that sort of thing is more damaging than other actions classed as criminal, by which some fathers offend against their children.

I was having tea once with an old lady who was "on the parish." That meant receiving a weekly payment of about seven shillings. She lodged with her married daughter and her young family. Mrs. Richardson was dressed in her ancient best, a frock of blue cotton, dotted with white, close-fitting and buttoned down the front. The dignity of age was made charming by her quickness of discernment. Like most Bow householders, she was an adept at finding topics of conversation with which to beguile visitors, yet never forgetting local etiquette so far as to commit the vulgarity of blaming, judging, or condemning any one. She told me that her daughter and her husband were at the seaside for a week. That was why she had the freedom of the house and could ask me in to tea. She was glad they were returning the next day, however, as she had found housekeeping for the children too much of a responsibility. "Not that the girls hadn't been willing helpers. But it was the laying out of the money that troubled her. Other people's money is awkward to handle. She had kept careful accounts to show her daughter. She didn't think there was a single item she could find fault with. She hadn't spent a penny more than necessary. She had checked every item again and again. There was only one purchase that any one might query—threepence for firewood. A pore man was hawking the wood down the street from door to door; he looked that downhearted, she'd bought some from him though of course firewood wasn't actually needed in the house just then. But it would keep. He had asked her tuppence, but she had given him thrippence because it was worth that." Then ashamed of being so personal, she began to talk about the minister who had recently come to her chapel. It had been almost derelict, but by his

passionate devotion, his complete sincerity of spirit, he was building up a tempered, orderly, energetic, Congregational church. He took a meagre salary, gave most of it away, lived a solitary life in lodgings, pouring his whole soul into his work.

"What do you think of our new minister?" she inquired, giving me a lengthy meditative look. I expressed admiration. She nodded her head. Then leaning forward as though about to communicate some pronouncement of great daring and originality, she said:

"D'you know, I believe he's a Christian!"

My amazement was evidently what she expected, though it came from a wholly different source. Bow people favour an economy of words. They don't say what they don't mean.

One evening a group of young men were discussing what signs betokened the Christian. How could such an one be distinguished from another? Various criteria were contributed.

"There's a sad look on their faces," said the captain of the football team. Seeing us surprised, he enlarged upon this answer: "They want people to turn to God. They keep on trying, and the people don't turn. Of course they can't help feeling sad about it. You can see it plain."

"They are equal-minded," said another youth. This proved to mean "not changeable or altering their behaviour to people of different rank or possessions, not having favourites, not letting themselves give way to fear."

"They have life in themselves," observed another. Explaining his meaning more fully, he said, "They don't get moody and fed up. They don't depend on outside circumstances."

A middle-aged man, a very faithful friend and a church member, said, "I never knew but one Christian, and he's dead."

Obviously, one doesn't go to Bow to hear much good of oneself.

I came to know the old house in Bow from which Henry VIII used to court Ann Boleyn. A secret staircase led underground and out to their rendezvous in the forest glades. Two girls rediscovered the passage some years ago. They fell in and were nearly asphyxiated. The beautiful Tudor ceiling of its dining-room has attracted visitors from far and wide. Ironically enough, it is now a baby clinic.

After a year or two I received a letter from the new minister of the Congregational church asking me to take on the leadership of his Women's Meeting. I laughed rather immoderately at the idea and was preparing to clothe my refusal in as polite terms as I could when Doris calmly inquired what was amusing me. It was obvious to her that I ought to take on any job in Bow that I was able to do, and she would help me. Doris' sudden thrusts of common-sense advice always greatly affect me. People tell her she must have been one of Pharaoh's taskmasters in a former age. So I wrote to the unknown minister a prim letter saying I knew nothing about the running of women's meetings, but I would come along the following Monday and have a look at them. A jolly little crowd of thirty was assembled, obviously rather stimulated and expectant. I liked the feel of the group and their tiptoe keenness. They seemed to take it for granted I had come to shepherd them. I didn't know until long afterwards that only five of them belonged to the place at all. It was the first appearance of the rest. The resourceful minister had somehow cajoled or coerced strangers into coming. He had offered tea, but that alone would not have brought them out. Anyhow, we all fell into his pious trap and stuck together for many years. We grew and grew. Speakers came down to exhort, instruct and inspire us. We listened to the intricacies of industrial law, and how to take advantage of hitherto unknown safeguards provided for workers; we heard talks on "foreign parts" by returned travellers; we looked at gruesome diagrams giving details of what would happen to our insides if we indulged in alcoholic drinks; we enjoyed good music; we went into the women's suffrage movement together; we prayed and listened to the Bible; our religion touched life at all points and made sense out of it.

One of our annual affairs was the window-garden competition. A squalid road of grey, shoddily-built, often verminous houses was sometimes rendered gay by a row of pot plants filling the window sills, enclosed in home-made woodwork, brightly painted and ornamented. Better still if one could get the materials and have a properly-made window box painted green. The East End, however, is so completely divorced from the beneficent processes of nature that it was a matter of doubt whether or no we could get earth to put into the box. Our

tiny back yards are often paved. We cannot even get our feet down on Mother Earth. I have sent ten miles before now to get a sackful of mould for our plants.

At one time I made a point of going to a certain house at dinner-time, a few loaves of bread, some butter and cheese under my arm. The father was a drinker, the mother of low mental calibre, both usually out on my arrival. The six children and I had some fun over those picnic dinners. One day there was an unusual air of surprised excitement, obvious in the way they welcomed me. Instead of a clamant welcome and being dragged to the table for the feast, I experienced a restrained and almost awed reception. It was not the bread-giver who was the centre of interest today but the eldest of the family, Bobby, aged thirteen. They caught hold of me by skirt or arm, according to their size, and piloted me through the passage to the kitchen, announcing in different tones the object of our common pilgrimage. "Bobby's nail," they chanted. "Come and see Bobby's nail." "Bobby's nail," echoed the baby.

The object of this recently engendered hero-worship held a little aloof, bashful, yet at the same time elated, like a boy who has knocked up a century for his house in a school cricket match. Once we had all crushed into the kitchen, the door was ceremoniously closed. Evidently the arcana of this mystery was in the narrow space between the door and the dresser. Sticking out at rakish angles from the dirty wall paper were several old and rusty nails. One of them had been newly straightened and cleaned. Depending from it was a necktie. Underneath appeared words newly written in pencil, "Bobby's nail." An important moment had arrived since my last visit. Bobby had developed into a person. No longer was he just one of a crowd, the spare parts of his garments interchangeable or all lumped together and put away in a common drawer pell-mell by a feeble-minded and easy-moralled mother. Her eldest son had asserted himself. He had taken possession of a nail. I can still see his shining eyes watching my initiation into this secret, and the other children so vicariously proud.

Very early in my apprenticeship to life in the East End I had the good fortune to come across an unusually blunt outspoken person.

I knocked at her door as I had done at all other doors in that street, giving out leaflets advertising a special meeting. She was middle-aged, vigorous-looking and countrified with a certain stolidity that comes from contact with the soil. She looked very straight at me, then at the proffered leaflet. "Is it to some church or chapel, dear?" she inquired. "Because if so, I don't go to none o' them places." I tried to think of some way of describing our meeting that would rid it of this taint. Meanwhile, sensing my curiosity as to her so definite distaste, she explained: "I don't like going to churches and chapels. They always try to give you something. That doesn't suit me." Now the clue was in my hands, I could truthfully reassure her that I had the same intense dislike of mixing up church and charities. She became one of our staunchest members.

CHAPTER IV

The Two Worlds

INTERSECTING the path of these early explorations into East End life was the ordinary placid flowing stream of family happenings which occupied most of my time.

For several months of the year our house was shut up and we went to the French or Italian Riviera. I used to spend hours in the Casino at Monte Carlo, watching the changing scene. Why do people call it gay? I would study the hard-faced women with their tell-tale mouths; paint cannot alter the disillusioned lines at each corner where the lips droop. There one saw men who have forgotten how to look upon their fellows except as fellow gamblers who enrich them by their losings or thwart them by occupying too long the seat which they covet for themselves. I saw a player gathering up her system card, her pin, her purse, and her gloves preparatory to vacating her seat. Two people, a man and a woman, were standing behind, one on each side of her chair, waiting to swoop upon it. Obviously it was to be a battle between them. As the player rose, naked greed and feverish anxiety showed in their faces. The man won on the first count. He wriggled into the chair almost before it was empty and began to set out his paraphernalia on the green baize in front of him. Behind his chair, the woman stood with drooping head. Perhaps she was doing eye exercises, for when she counterfeited a sob or two, she was able to produce a bastard tear. The man's face was a study. Horror at being seen in public making a woman cry struggled with disgust at her feminine technique. He turned on her one searching, blasting glare, pushed back his chair, and made off. In the twinkling of an eye, she had insinuated herself into it, no trace of tears now, only the gambler's mask, wary, alert, withdrawn, concentrated, and slightly pained.

An old lady from our hotel who spent every afternoon in the Casino saw me meandering round the tables and conceived the idea that I was lucky. Clutching me with her bony hands, she tried to make me

give her a number. Habituées of luxury hotels are pathetic figures. They often have no *raison d'être* and desperately want one. They go to the Riviera because there is no particular reason why they should go anywhere else. They have the freedom of the whole world. Their power of choice is unlimited. No one but themselves need be consulted about anything. Their own will is supreme. They are lords of time and place. And after a little they find they don't like it. The days grow long. Time doesn't fly any more. It isn't very nice to realize that there is no place where one belongs, where one is needed, nobody who wants one very much. They recognize their kinship with those heavy-bodied fellow guests who seem to spend so much time whiling away "the awkward hour or two that must inevitably elapse before preparing for the next meal." Some carve out queer careers for themselves to avoid the nausea of boredom. In the hotel next to ours, one woman constituted herself the voluntary picnic-planner, the excursion-promotor, the inventor of parties for the rest of the hotel residents. Her days henceforward were permeated with a sense of busy-ness. Some semblance of the divine imperative was introduced into the sorry pattern of her life. One elderly couple found a magnum of champagne every evening at dinner helped them to forget their spiritual bankruptcy. Some months passed before the stage was reached when lunch seemed an equally apt occasion for ordering the same-sized bottle. Why not? No sufficient answer was forthcoming. So the man's face became more blotchy, and the woman's chin receded still further.

Every evening after dinner a group of us who hiked together on the Alpes Maritimes by day used to play paper games, the predecessors of crossword puzzles, competitive and equally engrossing. One night we decided to make a list, each of us, of the twenty people in the whole of human history whom we admired most. A Wesleyan, a charming woman of over sixty who joined our group every night, included in her list twelve British Methodist ministers. One day after we had walked farther than usual, we decided to leave out paper games after dinner. One of our group, the champagne lady, was deeply disappointed. "I look forward to this hour all through the day," she said.

During Kingsley's last term at Cambridge we all went up for May

Week. The grand ball that ended with a photograph taken out-of-doors by early sunlight, the long afternoons at the races, the picnics on the river, the lazy hours on the "Backs," exercised their perennial charm. But there was a cloud over me all the time. Somehow I had become embroiled in the affairs of a well-known factory in Bow. Perhaps it was a sort of baptism for me, a necessary clash between the two worlds in which I was living. During our Whitsun holiday the factory girls had talked about their earnings, how a sum was being held back. "They supposed it was the foreman trying some new stunt. It didn't amount to much, only a shilling or two; but all the same it was a bit thick. When they mentioned it, he had told 'em they must be mistook in their reckoning, but they weren't. They'd gone through it backwards, forwards, every ways, and they were short, about a dozen of them." Of course I felt much more indignant than they, but they didn't want me to do anything about it. They might get the sack if it came out that they'd been grumbling.

At a Loughton tennis party soon after, one of my fellow guests mentioned this particular factory, praising the character of its manager. Being a fool, I rushed in with my little bit of knowledge, a detestable weakness of mine. Some weeks later, the same lady stopped me on the street to say she had seen the factory manager and had passed on to him what I had said about his girls not getting properly paid. "I thought you'd be glad for me to report it, as you're so keen about them."

Panic seized me. Suppose the girls should get into trouble! There was only one crumb of comfort. I had not mentioned their names. Soon an intimidating, official-looking letter from the manager arrived at Loughton. It requested me to come to his office and answer a few questions. I went. Very stiff-backed, provoked, and disapproving, he tried to make me tell the name of my informant. Poor man? He was an excellent person who wanted to discover the irregularity and put it right. But his unbending air of conscious rectitude and my inexperience created an impasse. He assured me he had other means at his disposal for getting at the truth, and I left, dismally convinced of my own ineptitude.

He had suavely praised our club, saying he had subscribed to the

excellent work it had done in the past. In the past? A new horror! Suppose he withdrew his subscription, and the old-established, highly-respected club suffered because of me, a very raw recruit! I lay in bed at night, cowering in spirit. Wherever I went, I was haunted by the spectacle of twelve girls out of work for life, such magnifying power did my mood of misery possess. When eventually a letter arrived from the manager, its embossed solidity seemed to signal victory. "He had looked up the list of girls excused for the week's holiday at Whitsun. It had been an easy matter to call each in turn and in this way to discover which of them had confided in me. He had set on foot an inquiry about the docked wages. The slight discrepancy had been put right. "As usual," he added, "mountains have been made out of mole-hills." I wonder how big a factory girl's mountain must be before it looks more than a molehill to a business man. Next club night I offered apologies to my informant, fearfully inquiring whether she were going to suffer on my account. She reported that quite a tidy sum of back payment had been handed out to the girls, and, sack or no sack, it was a satisfactory affair to contemplate.

For a few months I kept house for Kingsley in Hampstead. Our digs were three diminutive rooms. Here we became interested in the Minority Report of the Royal Commission of the Poor Law, drawn up by George Lansbury, Beatrice and Sydney Webb, and supported by a considerable body of public opinion. A great meeting was held in the Albert Hall to demonstrate the wisdom of its findings. I had never heard any political speech so illuminating, so obviously sensible as the one delivered by Mrs. Webb that night. Kingsley and I promptly joined the well-organized campaign for propagating the Socialist ideas of the Minority Report. Mrs. Webb had me to tea and provided me with a few sound arguments with which to uphold this new doctrine against my old comrades in the Liberal Party.

I had an argument of my own now that never failed to support me in dealing with the narrow-minded, the intransigent, and the reactionary. I got hold of a book called *Flatland.* It had been published anonymously, was out of print, and had never been well known. Its author, a brilliant mathematician, used simple language and crisp sen-

tences in the telling of his strange story. Its implications reached beyond human experience. He made credible a state of society in a world of only two dimensions, then stimulated one to try to see beyond three-dimensional horizons. I read this little book many times. It made me see how ridiculous we often are in our negations, our strutting self-importance, our penchant for making labels and sticking them on people. As though labelling a person disposed of him!

It had clever diagrams illustrating the daily life of the hero of the book, a square. The story opens in his study, where his son, a promising young pentagon, is having his weekly lesson in mathematics. The two are considering the nature of length and breadth and exploring the possibilities of scientific development in their own world, when the son casually inquires, could there be a third dimension anywhere in the universe? The father roundly rebukes him for talking nonsense, and the youngster goes to bed. A plan of the house is appended, a house in which every measurement is forwards or sideways. One learns to accommodate one's mind to these limitations as the pages turn. Imagine a cupboard in a flat room, formed by an angle in the corner being closed in by a third side, the cupboard door. This cupboard was securely fastened and seemed to the householder, the square, as safe, as impossible to open as our own. The mother* is preparing supper in the kitchen.

The square is musing on his son's idle talk. He cannot put out of his mind the boy's foolish remark. A third dimension! Inconceivable! As he meditates, he hears a voice. "The boy was right. I come from the land of three dimensions, the earth. I am ready to enlighten you if you are willing."

Being free from all superstitious fears, tinged with hardy scepticism to boot; the square was convinced that some practical joker of ventriloquial skill was trying to deceive him, perhaps with the view of pouring discredit on his academic reputation.

"Let me convince you," pleaded the voice. "Let me demonstrate. I can see down into your cupboard."

* It must be shamefully recorded that in Flatland women are the lowest manifestations of life, merely straight lines pointed like needles, used as soldiers. Their inferior brains, however, prevent their constituting any serious danger to the state.

"Dowh! What an unscientific term! Cease playing the part of a fool!" countered the square.

"Let's be scientific, then," continued the voice. "I will tell you what is locked away in that cupboard."

His description disconcerted the square, for it was only the previous day that he had carefully put away those notes when no one was present. Nor had he disclosed the fact to any.

"Forgive my churlishness, but my business with you is urgent," continued the visitor. "I propose to extract those notes from above without opening the cupboard. Please satisfy yourself first that they are there."

The square could find nothing to say when he opened the cupboard for the second time and found it empty.

"One more proof, a painfully tangible one, I fear," said the voice. "You think your stomach is well protected with surrounding tissue from any outside touch. But I am going to reach down into it with my finger."

A stab of excruciating pain fully convinced the square. Almost dazed with the double shock, he humbly asked for enlightenment. The visitor carefully raised him out of Flatland, and flew through space, instructing him the while as to its nature.

After making him familiar with the ways of the earth, he took him to the land of one dimension, Line Land, where life was surprisingly varied, its denizens as satisfied as Flatland people with their advanced position in the cosmic order. Before returning the square to his native land where he was to begin his great prophetic task of enlightening his fellow citizens as to the various modes of existence, he took him to the land of no dimension. Here a point existed. It held forth incessantly in self-sufficient bliss, praising and exalting its own being. "There is no other but I," it chanted unceasingly.

Knowing how terrific would be the square's task in trying to convince any other Flatland dweller of the truth, the visitor bade him preserve a sturdy spirit, never doubt his great mission, and remember that in the universe there may be lands of four, five, and even six dimensions.

The square was imprisoned as a dangerous lunatic as soon as he

related his impossible experiences. Nothing daunted, he continued his steadfast witness to the existence of wider horizons.

In 1910 Father, Mother, and I went to Palestine. I'm glad I saw it before the war. I had been warned of the wretched state of the holy places, of the church built over the manger site in Bethlehem, of the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem. I accepted uncritically, merely because I wanted to, the theory that the real Golgotha was to be found some way out of the city in a garden, free from the odour of sanctity and the quarrels of worshippers. But I hadn't expected such a terrific sense of shame as overwhelmed me when I saw a Turkish soldier, the Moslem crescent on his uniform, marching up and down with fixed bayonet in front of the high altar of the Bethlehem Church to keep the Christians from shedding each other's blood. I thought I detected a scornful curve on his lips.

In the Holy Sepulchre Church, the chapel marking the holiest site was completely dilapidated, the floor uneven, plaster peeling off the walls, nails woolly with rust and dirt, protruding at inane angles. Packing-cases of valuable mosaic from Italy had been lying unopened for six years in the crypt. No one could decide who was to have the honour of renovation.

Young Moslems at a training-school for Mohammedan missionaries in Cairo were being drilled in propaganda, taught to state their case convincingly. "Never deny that the teaching of Christ is noble," they were told, "that His doctrine goes beyond the rules of life laid down for us by the Prophet. But point out sedulously that the laws Jesus Christ gave are never followed and never have been. His teaching is too high for human beings to act upon. That proves Him to have been a faulty leader, a foolish prophet. Stress the fact that we Moslems can and do keep the laws of our religion."

We spent the next few months on the Riviera in Mentone. Instead of staying near the sea, this time we found a little hotel on top of one of the green ridges that stretch from the town right up to the top of the Alpes Maritimes, inaccessible except by funicula or a winding sun-baked mule track. Close to the hotel stood a deserted monastery, the Annunziata. A row of cypress and eucalyptus trees made its high

courtyard fragrant and restful in the hottest weather. The rough cobbled path ran past the hotel garden, past the drawing-room door on the second floor, and a little further on past the French window on the third. Buildings that climb up hills have a peculiar fascination of their own.

The Annunziata ridge is the best prayer place I've ever known. Olive trees and pungent-smelling shrubs cover both sides of the steep slope which leads down to the valleys. Every turn of the path discloses some fresh vista, some new pattern of dappled sunshine. The hillsides used to people themselves with my special friends in Bow. I would imagine them, one by one, coming up from behind the trees on to the sun-flecked path, coming into the presence of God.

In London, a trilogy of historical plays was produced during this decade by the poet, Newman Howard: *Constantine the Great, Savonarola,* and *Kiartan the Icelander.* The latter wove itself into the fabric of my thinking and greatly confirmed my pacifist faith. Kiartan was supposed to portray the perfect Christian. The young Viking, chief of one of the islands, in the course of his adventures discovered Christianity. He became enamoured of the character of the Galilean hero who set multitudes free from worn-out conventions and from bondage to their own selves. Kiartan's enemies, however, had leagued themselves with the Christian priests to keep him prisoner at the court of Norway They dispatched to Iceland a rumour of his unfaithfulness. He escaped and reached home unexpected and just too late. His best friend had turned traitor and half mad with shame and fear lay in wait to murder Kiartan at night. Kiartan was much stronger and more skilled in sword play. He soon had the assailant in his power. But instead of striking, he gazed at him a moment, then threw away his sword, exclaiming,

"Brother, by thy hand better were I slain,
Than bid thee die by mine."

As he fell at his friend's hand, the noise attracted the islanders. They gathered round, made the murderer confess, sifted away the false from the true and found Kiartan had been all the time clear of reproach. The murderer kept repeating the strange words with which Kiartan

fell. The people recognized in them a new teaching, perhaps the beginning of a new era. They decided to discover for themselves what this potent Christianity meant. Eventually the couplet was enshrined in one of their national sagas and handed down throughout the centuries.

Towards the end of the night journey from Italy to Paris a fellow traveller and I fell into conversation. She was a Christian Scientist, the first I had met. She told me I ought to read Mrs. Eddy's book if I wanted to understand the Bible. I said, more modestly than it looks on paper, that I thought I got quite a lot out of the Bible, anyhow, thank you very much indeed. "Excuse my saying so," she said, "but that is just a little worldly wisdom on your part and not accurate."

The argument would probably have got us no further, for words are a potent means of misunderstanding. But she turned to facts. "When you get to Paris, won't you be tired and glad to rest?"

"Yes," I agreed.

"All I shall need," she informed me, "is ten minutes' quiet meditation or prayer. Then I shall be absolutely refreshed and ready to give the lecture due shortly after my arrival."

That registered. I knew it was true. Christians had no business to be weary, weak, or miserable. As though to test me, a noxious germ settled in my throat on arrival in Paris. I wrestled with myself, refusing to give it even the hospitality of buying gargle or lozenges. It was hard work for a day and a half, and then all was well.

I found myself becoming intolerant of the way my fellow Christians talked about the will of God. I noticed how people usually used this creative phrase, "the will of God," in connection with some impending tragedy, bracketing it with death and disaster, considering it passively, resignedly. A peculiarly revolting murder occurred. A young girl had apparently driven a youth nearly distracted with her flirtations, and had summarily suffered for it. Her coffin was white, with gilt handles. On it was written "Thy will be done." A friend and I joined in almost constant prayer for an attractive small boy we knew. He had been laid low by some disease. I knew it was God's will for the boy to live. No noisome germ was so potent as the Creative Spirit. We prayed aloud once, strengthening our confidence that the disease was being put to

rout. I was badly jolted by the sentence my friend added at the end, "If it be Thy will." Jesus relied with confidence upon God's coöperation in overcoming disease. This is a law of nature that we haven't yet learnt. It's our silly, intermittent, loosely-held and so-easily-daunted hopes that hold us back from curing the sick. Even Jesus declared He couldn't work any cure in those villages where the people hadn't any faith. Our prayers fail continually, not because they aren't according to God's will, but because we are so mealy-mouthed about them. Even if you pray for a bad thing, it will probably happen. It's deep down in the order of the universe, this law, that faith, confidence, positive "certain-sureness" tends to bring to pass the thing so definitely expected.

News came, trickling at first but later in a steady stream, about living conditions on the Congo. The King of Belgium had sole responsibility for this region, and in the rush for rubber and profits and power, atrocities were being committed that turned one sick. If enough rubber were not brought in, men's hands were forfeit. Mr. E. D. Morel (later of the Union of Democratic Control) formed the Congo Reform Association. Mr. de Vere Stacpoole revealed the facts in a powerful novel, *Pools of Silence*. Missionaries reported the facts; a neighbouring minister in Bow had worked for years on the Congo. On one of his journeys he had seen a sackful of human hands.

This was on my mind day and night. I wanted all parsons to perform their proper function, to be prophets, to speak out the truth so that no one could go on contentedly talking about Europe as though it were Christian, and honouring crowned heads as though some were not murderers, and priding themselves on carrying the white man's burden of civilization when we were torturing Africa with our callousness and greed. As R. J. Campbell was at the height of his influence at the City Temple, I betook myself in an agony of self-consciousness to Enfield, where I had heard he lived. I tremblingly followed the maid through the house into the garden, where I blurted out my request to him to preach on the subject. Strange that I could have experienced so much anguish over a simple affair like that! The result was a crowded church with the association's committeemen all packed into the pulpit.

Then the idea gripped me that it wasn't good enough for big meet-

ings of protest to be held, sermons given, books written, Cabinet Ministers primed with facts, all to show the tyranny and callous cruelty of the present régime. Some one ought to go to the king, living out there on the Riviera with his beautiful lady, face him with the facts, and implore him to have mercy on his soul. For a couple of years the thought pursued me, haunted me. I tried to find some one who would go. If no one else would do it, why not I? I wished I could die to escape the logic of the situation. I went so far as to supply myself with a passport and secure the promise of an old school friend's companionship and support. Night after night I would awake and rehearse the interview. I don't remember how circumstances changed or what occurred to hold me back, whether it was slackness on my part or a genuine reason. In any case, the king died. The whole régime was changed. The Belgian government took over responsibility. The tortures stopped.

A letter appeared in the papers, "An Open Letter to the Czar of Russia from Leo Tolstoi." The old man appealed to the young Emperor to change his policy towards those people who had embraced the philosophy of non-resistance. The poor and simple peasants merited no persecution. He, Leo Tolstoi, was the one who should be punished. He was responsible for the spread of these ideas. He begged the Czar to take his life in lieu of theirs. It would be a most merciful act.

I took the letter to the boys I taught in the Loughton Union Church. It reënforced the peculiar importance of doing Jesus Christ the honour of taking Him seriously, of thinking out His teaching in terms of daily life, and then acting on it even if ordered by police, prelates, and princes to do the opposite. I read them also the speech the Kaiser made in Potsdam to the new recruits of the German conscript army: "Soldiers, you are now mine. You have sworn the soldier's oath. Whatever you are ordered to do, that you must perform, even though it were to fire on your own kinsfolk." We compared it with the Sermon on the Mount. I challenged them to start at once thinking out which way they were going to take—the Czar's, Tolstoi's, the conscripts', or Christ's?

A doctor wrote to the London press a plea for better housing. He

told in a few words how he had attended a confinement one night in a one-roomed home. A neighbour and he had rigged up a sheet as a screen round the bed, in case the other children should wake. Just as the baby arrived, he noticed a little girl's face staring, horror-stricken. He could not forget it.

The story of Elisha and his young servant was always at the back of my mind. What a pity that readers are often too clever to appreciate the humour and the local colour surrounding it! Because they let themselves be put off by what they categorize as absurd or inaccurate in its setting, they fail to reach its inherent truth. Picture the old seer, a shrewd statesman with much common sense and possibly second sight. As a tactician, he is more than a match for the Syrian king's generals who are ordered to capture him. He remains unperturbed in Dothan, knowing well how to confuse them and their plans. His servant gets up early to fetch water and make the camp fire. He espies the encircling army and, terrified, calls out, "Alas! my master, what shall we do!" The old man can't help pitying the youth whose clear-sightedness is so short-sighted, and mentions it to God, as in a casual aside, "O Lord! open the young man's eyes!" as though to say, "Let him into our secret, poor youth!" And the young man looks again. Unmistakably the troops of the Syrians are there just as he saw them. But above, around, everywhere, filling every corner of space, is another power, another host, another Reality. "My Father! My Father!" he cries, no longer afraid.

CHAPTER VI

Kingsley Hall

CAN one know a place unless one sleeps in it? Doris and I used to seize various opportunities for leaving home and living in Bow for a time. She was the first to do it, as a regular lodger in the house of a women's-meeting member. The rest of us were in the midst of mimosa and orange groves, but Doris vowed she would like nothing better than to get rid of us all and settle down in Bow.

The first room we had together was an attic in Doric Lodge, the severe-looking appendage of a missionary-training college; but this house was on the noisy, bustling Bow Road nearly as far West as Mile End and definitely off our beat. For the next winter, a couple of rooms close to Bryant & May's match factory constituted our *pied-à-terre.*

I have two clear memories of this lodging. The first is of a stalk of Madonna lilies brought by a West End visitor. For days the room was fragrant. The second is of a struggle of will. I was saying my prayers when a representative of one of the various types of vermin made its presence felt. I called to mind fakirs, hermits, mediæval saints, the power of mind over matter. I practised the method of trying to nullify, one by one, the evidence of each of the five senses. Sight was in abeyance, anyhow. Hearing nothing was more difficult to accomplish. Smell and taste were easy to forget. But touch? I started on the next stage, tried to blot out past, future, time itself. I waited there, tensely concentrating on the fact that I was merely a speck in the universe and must therefore preserve my only claim to be other than a parasite myself, by acting with firmness and spirit. I finished my prayers. Having gained my point once, I have ever since taken immediate steps to slaughter all such interrupters.

The next lodging was much better, the front upstairs room of a little house in Bruce Road, right in the midst of all our friends. Here an old ambition was realized; we had bare scrubbed boards, a wash-

stand made out of a packing-case, and two window boxes in which after much hope deferred petunias flaunted gaily.

In 1912 Kingsley was getting interested in Bow. He had been in business but had decided to leave it and devote his time to Bow. He, Doris, and I took a small house in a long row, No. 60, had it deloused, papered, and started housekeeping together. He was *persona grata* with the women's meeting; the older members felt particularly gay and vigorous after meeting him and having a chat on the street. The girls were surprised to find, as we all scrubbed and polished and cleaned and dusted together, what a handy man he was. Only two incidents stand out in my mind: a Sunday evening when one of the Lansburys had been having tea with us, and Kingsley took out his fiddle in the darkening room and made music for us; a week evening when the postman, a Socialist member of the Borough Council, came in with his wife and her needlework and they both instructed us in local politics. They told us how the local Labour Party was dealing with the infant-mortality rates,[1] with slum clearance, and with the relief of the destitute.

No. 60 became the centre of so much striving, such varied hopes, dangers, and aspirations, that those who made it their Mecca for eleven years can never feel quite the same about any other place. It was somewhere near the middle of a long row of about fifty houses, the line of their ugly façades almost unbroken. According to local feeling, it is a distinguished road. It has a church at each end, a doctor at each end, and only one pub. Most of its houses have a battered railing and an iron gate, often with a broken spike or two. One gathered that our street door had once been brown. The varnish long ago had blistered and peeled off. The knocker was of iron too ancient and knobby to hold the black paint. Its walls were damp inside. It had mice, six small rooms and a wee garden wherein only one rose out of six survived its first year, a slightly higher mortality rate than the infants'. Our sitting-room measured twelve by fourteen feet. One could sit at the table, poke the fire, answer the wall telephone, open the window, and shut the door

[1] One hundred and fifty-nine per thousand babies born used to die before they reached the age of twelve months (1912). We had the heaviest infant-mortality rate in London.

almost without getting out of one's chair. One just tilted it a bit. Twelve of us managed to eat our Sunday dinner there each week. Bruce Road is super-respectable, but it leads into one of the poorest of all the adjacent streets and at the other end becomes Little Bruce Road out of which three other streets run, all overflowing with children. Two of them are perfect playgrounds, *cul-de-sacs,* bounded by a high railway wall.

On a fine summer evening these roads present a gay appearance. The householders fetch out a couple of kitchen chairs and sit by the door, smoking and talking. Boys play cricket, their ball a stone wrapped in rags and tied with string, their wickets painted white on any convenient wall. Girls make rope swings depending from lamp posts. The younger ones play "grown-ups," assuming prim schoolmarms' voices or lugging fat baby brothers and sisters about. Sitting under the front-room window, on the pavement, adolescent boys play cards.

"How to reach the Masses!" At interdenominational conferences this used to be a stock subject for discussion. It baffled the academic minds of even leading ministers. "How to reach the Masses!" I heard it well discussed by many public speakers. But no one suggested the simple expedient of going to live with them. In a street like ours a peculiar sympathy is set up among people who suffer at the hands of the same landlord, who compare notes as to which inspector is most likely to insist on the landlord making the roof water-tight, and which of them might be meeting the said landlord for lunch. Also, to demonstrate on each other's walls rival methods of delousing creates a bond of helpfulness that lasts.

Overcrowding reached the figure of twelve to a room. Let us translate the figure into terms of flesh and blood. See a room in your mind's eye. A father and mother, five adolescents, four children and a baby. There's a low built-in cupboard for dishes, cups, and saucers. There's possibly an alcove with a curtain hung in front, used for hanging up clothes, twelve people's clothes. There's a chest of drawers, a table, a stove. What if some one is ill? If one wants to study, draw, play, take a nap? Where is the soiled linen to be put?

Suddenly I discovered trees. Of course I'd known they were there, that they were deemed worth driving out to visit when allowed to grow

as they liked in forests. Browning had written a poem to a lady who loved them so much that he thought her ghost would walk among them. But as for me, I would stand still, politely camouflaging my boredom, while visitors whom I was supposed to be entertaining in the garden or the forest[1] gazed round enraptured. Sometimes I would start counting the seconds to see how long the ordeal was lasting. Then one day in May, after a three-weeks sojourn in Bow, I went into the country. And it was like seeing everything for the first time—sky, grass; clouds, trees. I stared and stared. It was a new world.

From that day onwards Epping Forest was my joy. It used to be very much bigger. Owners of land adjacent to it pushed out their fences further and further, illegally enclosing many miles. Some fifty years ago, two van loads of East End men arrived early one morning with crowbars and hatchets and hacked down the newest fences just erected by a Loughton landowner. One can still see the furrows which he had ploughed in this common land. The workmen's action stirred up local opinion; representations were made to the government. Ever since that day the whole forest has been well guarded.

The winter of 1913-1914 was memorable. I suppose most people who were grown up when the war broke out look back to that last Christmas of the old world with a peculiar tenderness. It has become vested with a strange sort of glamour. Something within one almost aches at the thought of it.

I was fortunate enough to spend the time in well-nigh perfect company. Kingsley had had appendix trouble. It started again rather seriously that autumn and he had to leave his work with his friend Ernest Dowsett to come home and be nursed. For his convalescence, Father, Mother, he, and I set off for the Riviera. Doris, as usual, said she would stick to Bow. Was she pretending, I wonder? Things always seemed to improve in my absence, and I took her at her word.

Jen, my eldest stepsister, and her husband, George Hardy, joined us in Bordighera. This was the first time that the two men, Kingsley and George, both so dear to me, came to know each other intimately. Their paths had scarcely crossed before, and now night after night Mother and I would sit with our work or our patience cards replete

[1] Our house was within five minutes' walk from Epping Forest.

with satisfaction as the two started perambulating the winter garden together, enjoying each other's conversation. Neither was alive the following Christmas.

In the middle of the winter George and Jen left for London and returned, after a few weeks, Sir George and Lady Hardy. The honour of the K.C.B. was given him in recognition of the brilliant actuarial work he had done, paving the way for Lloyd George's Health and Unemployment Insurance schemes. Payment for government work comes late. He had long promised to give me part of the check for Bow. It came that winter. My share of it bought a little portable instrument, a dulcetone, just on the market. It had collapsible legs and a keyboard like a piano, except that its notes couldn't go out of tune; each struck a tuning-fork. The Nursery School in Bow used it for years to accompany its band and its singing.

The mule-paths of Bordighera leading from the plage to the heights, its olive woods and vineyards, the sunny mountain villages where we used to drive out for tea, are inextricably woven into the pattern of that winter.

Mother loved Italians and lost no opportunity of getting into conversation with porters, coachmen, and hotel servants. As her vocabulary was limited, she evolved a good many original words of her own, combining syllables from both languages which were often extraordinarily effective. On one excursion, however, try as she would, she could not engage the driver in amicable conversation. Her friendly remarks conveyed no meaning to him. Though not easily baffled, she at length gave up the attempt, exclaiming, "Silly boy! He doesn't understand his own language."

I remember one Sunday evening, waiting about in the wood that surrounded the English church to waylay the chaplain. Everyone had gone home except him and me. I had been so lamentably bored with the service that it seemed an obvious duty to tell him one couldn't hear what he read, and his gabbling of the prayers must surely dispel any serenity one had brought to church. Every week we were made to spend a large amount of time asking for God's help in preventing our ox or ass or man or maidservant from working on the Sabbath Day. I could not generate any great enthusiasm for reciting the Command-

ments, but if I did repeat them, I had to try to keep them. I couldn't prevent the hotel manservant from waiting on me each Sunday, but the chambermaid and the Boots could be quietly released of the bed-making and the shoe-polishing.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Marie after breakfast, when she found my bed made. She was eager to know why. "Wasn't it comfortable, then, last night?"

We had become friendly over the hooks and buttons of evening frocks which were generally at the back in those pre-zipper days. Feeling rather self-conscious, I had to tell her the reason.

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!" she repeated, fascinated.

"That, too," I said, gaining confidence with the act of laughter, "is not the best way, perhaps, to use God's name."

Marie's eyes opened wider still. *"Mon Dieu!"* she exclaimed.

That winter I became more than ever disgusted with myself and with the contrast between conditions in Bow and on the Riviera. Evil was so deeply entrenched in the world that it was idiotic to fight against it with kid gloves on. I must undergo a more exacting self-discipline, a twenty-four-hour-a-day service. I must show some of these jewelled, bored and super-fed hotel people the facts of life as it is lived by some eighty per cent of their fellow countrymen. Would any one like to lend me a drawing-room? The chaplain of the Presbyterian church was perhaps one of the oldest inhabitants of Bordighera. We put the idea to him. His response was immediate. George Hardy was to take the chair. The advertisement was a full-length picture of one of my factory-girl friends, neat, straight, slim, self-respecting, and intelligent. "But that's not my idea of a factory girl!" was the criticism evoked. An almost romantic glamour had been thrown around "slumming" in Victorian days when "ladies" started visiting workmen's homes. Then came the East End vogue of purple plush dresses, red plush picture hats trimmed with green ostrich feathers. This encouraged laughter and the skill of cartoonists. Riviera habituées thought the vogue had lasted.

My lecture was severely practical. I tried to show how much East Enders had to contribute to society, nation, and church; what they could teach us; what we must help them claim for themselves. I la-

boured the point that no special gifts were necessary to perform this task, that any human being endowed with the power of speech, common sense, humour and a certain amount of understanding could coöperate in this way.

Back in Bow after Easter I discovered that one of the most satisfactory ways of spending time is to go off with a gang of some twenty others to the forest, to Kew Gardens, to some old church or museum, to the gallery of a West End theatre. Bow folk make perfect companions. They know the art of life, enjoy every second, notice details, see a cause for mirth in every difficulty. It is *de rigueur* never to make a fuss, but to sing, laugh, and dance even if a downpour of rain is spoiling their finery; to "choose to walk" the four or five miles home if they miss the last underground train.

The oft-quoted East End mother was only preparing her child for the conventions when half-way through a long excursion to the seaside she shouted out to drown its howls, "Shurrup, carn't yer? If yer don't start enjoying yerself, I won't 'arf wallop yer."

I decided that it was rather silly to work with only one sex, whichever it be. Up till now I had come in contact with only a few men. One was an unemployed young man with four children, a pile of well-used books, and a marked devotion to fresh air, soap and water, the toothbrush, and setting-up exercises. Others were a foreman in a dog-biscuit factory, a Scottish ex-soldier from Boer War days whose dancing step matched mine, and our next-door neighbour, a red-headed Irish football-player. These and a couple of their brothers-in-law came round with Councillor Goodway one night to No. 60 while I put the idea of a men's adult school before them. The early hour of meeting on Sundays, the discussion periods and the free-and-easy nature of the proceedings appealed to them.

I suggested that we should be strictly practical. Mere theories untested by experience would be useless. We had all spent a good number of years absorbing Bow atmosphere. We knew the wretchedness inherent in the capitalist system. We had all been to countless meetings at street corners and in Victoria Park, where speeches were made by local orators, paid propagandists and volunteer devotees of various "causes." All described our miseries correctly. Some blamed the Church,

some the rich, some the government, some original sin, some the devil. I suggested that perhaps we were a bit weary of hearing so many self-righteous judgments. Even supposing all these were to blame, we might do no better ourselves were we in power. Let us be quite specific, then, in making up our minds what was the most needed thing in our neighbourhood. Of course we must each support our trade union and our political party, but we needn't wait for the final fulfilment of their program before we acted on our own responsibility. We might be dead by then. What could a group of individuals do to change the quality of life in a neighbourhood? Let us work out a practical plan.

This pleased them mightily. Not so the next part of an adult-school program, the Bible study. Why drag that in? They knew that Christianity was my ground of hope, my source of happiness, the spring of my energy. They were content that it should be. But what relevance had it to them? I proposed we should study the words of Jesus for half an hour each Sunday morning. His own words, not what some one said about Him or what some one else thought He meant but actually what He Himself, the workman, said. I challenged their knowledge of Him. Had they ever read His life? While at school they had probably been set the task of learning a bit of the Gospels by heart and been rapped over the knuckles for failing to remember the passage correctly. His teaching was far in advance of our labour leaders. In it there was to be found the solution of every one of our problems, economic, social, personal, and international. I suggested that if, after ten weeks of study, we could not find in His teaching the answer to our local problems in this year of Grace 1914, we ought to start a campaign there and then encouraging people to shut up the churches. People expended an enormous amount of time, money, leisure, and energy in keeping them open, and it was utter waste if Christian teaching held no solution of the world's troubles.

At this the men brightened considerably. The momentary glimpse they had of themselves touring the country with me on a "shut-the-churches" crusade proved titillating. So we began one Sunday in May, the seven of us. They were as keen on music as I. We found songs and hymns to suit us in the Fellowship Hymn-Book. We had silence for our prayers. We soon found ourselves pooling our experiences of life,

rubbing off each other's corners, making up for each other's deficiencies. We came to a common decision about the most desirable first step which, if we had the means, we would take to make life more interesting and pleasurable in Bow. It was to set up a teetotal public house, a sort of communal sitting-room, a place to meet one's mates in, to spend the evening in, a sort of people's house to be run by ourselves without profit or propaganda. But would the motive of the "common good" prove strong enough to produce adequate management which in ordinary pubs is paid for out of profits? Who would take on the unpleasant task of "chucker-out," the monotonous duty of serving the cakes and drinks at the bar, the thankless job of cleaning the spittoons, locking up at closing-time, keeping the furnace in order? Volunteers, they were convinced, would be available for every job. There were already seven such, anyway. Ah! but every night in the week? And after the novelty began to wear off? And when quarrels and jealousy started? I probed deeper. What about blackballing people? Should everybody be admitted? The drunkard, of course, but the thief, the prostitute? "Yes, so long as we keep our eyes well skinned," decided the men. Then what about the capitalist, the exploiter, the aristocrat, royalty? These might wish to visit us. "Yes, pore blighters, let 'em all come, if they want to. They'll learn a thing or two." This was the common decision. It found readiest expression when it had to be translated for clarity's sake into normal English, in the New Testament words, "Honour all men." "You can honour 'em as fellow creatures even if you can't admire 'em. You can 'ate the rotten things they do and at the same time see they can't 'elp theirselves. They was brought up that way. We've got to enlighten 'em."

The first day of the school we had collected enough New Testaments to start on the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew's Gospel. We each read as many verses aloud as we felt inclined, and then discussed their import. It took us months to get through those three chapters, so modern and revolutionary did they prove to be. One man was in the middle of reading when he looked up, surprised. "'Pon my word, Miss," he said, "it do seem interesting, don't it, when you put your mind to it?"

The two parts of the school proved complementary when we came

to the point of deciding whether the police were to be admitted to this hypothetical pub of ours, if trouble arose. The men were complete sceptics as to the incorruptibility of the police, would certainly not call them in, did not trust them nor their methods; moreover, they believed prison penalized the offender's children and increased his own criminal tendencies. We must depend for protection on ourselves, our common sense, on the good fellowship of the place.

"In case of war also?" I inquired. That gave them pause. We spent weeks considering Tolstoi's challenge to the Czar, and the Kaiser's speech to his recruits. Would the inherent kindliness and decency of ordinary human beings remain proof against a government mobilizing the nation's psychological as well as material resources for war? I explained my conviction that the practice of the Presence of God, as the Old Testament prophets caught glimpses of it, as Jesus knew it, as Brother Lawrence tested it out while performing his dull routine work in the monastery kitchen, was the only sure ground of brotherhood. It was the only adequate training for the attainment of that wisdom and disciplined courage that mankind must acquire before he finally overcomes the forces vested in imperialism, militarism, and capitalism. Man was always to be considered as man, God's child, never as one of a labelled crowd.

Thus we exercised our minds and stretched our spirits through those pleasant summer months, imagining that perhaps one day, ten or twenty years later, we should acquire this much-talked-of pub.

Then came August 4th and the pattern of the world was shattered. I took the news to Kingsley, who had just come home for the week-end. I found him in bed. He got up only to go to the hospital. There was one operation there, another at home six weeks later. And then he died. I was holding his hand. We talked a little, happily. His hand grew colder. I did not know death was near. I hadn't seen it come to any one before. "Muriel," he said, surprisedly, "it's getting dark." His breathing got slower. I turned to the nurse, beckoning her to give him a hypodermic, as had been done before. She shook her head. Kingsley had finished his twenty-six years of lovely living.

Nurse took my arm and piloted me out of the room. They tried to make me drink brandy and wanted me to cry. But I only wanted to

get used to this new relationship. It was an urgent matter. It seemed as though a part of me was out of the world and in the eternal. I had to stay with Kingsley in spirit for his sake as well as my own. I couldn't fail him. To cry seemed impossible, like disguising oneself in black garments, dishonouring to him. I sat alone until I realized the others hadn't seen him go, and they loved him just as much as I did, and I must tell them about it. I don't think they cried, either. The days after a very beloved person has slipped out of the flesh are strangely illuminating. Time stands still, somehow. It's easy to get everything done, letters written, cremation arranged for, because the hours seem not to move. An extra strength fills one; it becomes an elation as one safeguards the honour of the dead by planning the memorial service,[1] making it into a time of thanksgiving for the life lived and now enhanced somewhere, somehow.

Perhaps that is why Mother could say as we drove together in the early morning to the crematorium, three days later, "This is the happiest day of my life."

As the war days passed we were more and more thankful that Kingsley was neither being lionized for killing nor scoffed at for refusing to kill. Of physical pain he had his full share.

Doris and I had rearranged our room for his use during the illness. As no smallest detail of furnishing or decoration ever escaped Kingsley's eye, we inquired what picture he wanted to see on the wall at the foot of his bed when he awoke after the operation. "The one in the same position in my own room," he replied. So we brought in and nailed up Da Vinci's study of the head of Christ.

From now, things seemed to change. I came to know his friends more intimately. Life was widened, broadened, as though some one had thrust a strong hand through a thick curtain which hung across a window hiding the view. I dreamed only once of Kingsley. I was one of a huge congregation. We were all united in a joyful hymn of praise, thanking God for him, when suddenly he appeared at the end of my pew, straight, starry-eyed, and very happy. He came and stood by me, joining in the thanksgiving!

Jen Hardy telephoned me to come to Edwardes Square, Kensington,

[1] See Appendix I for memorial prayer quoted from an anonymous source.

where George was lying seriously ill. After a time he asked me to play Schubert's good-bye song. At the far end of the long room, he and Jen, married lovers for over thirty years, faced the imminent separation. I remembered how he had said to me that winter in Italy, "I want so much to believe in the future life that I cannot. My wishes make me distrust my judgment."

After George's death, Mother and Father each had a long illness. Doris and I took turns at nursing them at home and at carrying on the fairly full program in Bow. No part of it had been dropped during this summer. The pattern must be strictly adhered to in voluntary work. Otherwise it deteriorates easily into amateur philandering.

Kingsley had left in lieu of a will a sheet of notepaper specifying a few gifts to friends and leaving the rest of his money "to Muriel and Doris that the income from it may be used in their work among the people of Bow or wherever else they may go."

The Adult School men were gradually becoming the nucleus of a little group that could expand in bigger premises. Doris and I offered to rent the upstairs rooms next door if they cared to convert them into club premises, throw the two rooms into one, strip the walls and paint the woodwork. Some of the keenest of the Girl's Club and Women's Meeting members were ready for a forward move. They were wanting more opportunities for reading, study, music, and discussion. The landlord proved amenable to structural alterations, and for a few weeks we scraped wall paper, burnt sulphur candles, filled holes with putty, painted, laid linoleum, and planned a fine opening for the "Kingsley Rooms" with George Lansbury in the chair. How we crowded into the little place! And how many uses it was put to! An Adult School for Women was one of the first things started. Mother used often to come to that, just because she liked the women, never to give a talk or to lead in any way. Occasionally she would sing to them.

Years later a member decided to die. Her husband was impossible. As likely as not, when he came home from work, he'd drag the cloth off the table set ready for tea, throw the crockery and food into the fire. She had stuck it out for ten years and decided that the canal was better. She set out for Bow Bridge. Just before she reached the adjacent street, she heard Mother's voice singing. Amazed and abashed, she

turned round and went home. After a month or two she decided again to quit. The thing must be carried out this time. Mrs. Lester would not stop her again. Exactly the same thing happened at the same turn in the road. She came next day to ask me to tell the whole meeting how grateful she was for the new courage and joy and faith that had come to her.

The Kingsley Rooms served many useful purposes.

One day during his convalescence Father said: "What better memorial for Kingsley could we have than that public house you and the men in Bow are always talking about? I think I'll buy a place for you if you can find anything suitable."

I gasped with dismay. Certainly I agreed that we did not want a graveyard memorial for Kingsley, the broken pillar of granite, the casket covered with a bit of napery, or the simpering angel whom stone masons always seem to dress in heavy folds of drapery quite unsuitable for flying. But this wonderful scheme of ours in Bow had been scheduled for some far distant date. I was untrained, unbusiness-like, altogether unready for such an undertaking. To my father's vast amusement, I refused his offer.

He looked me up and down, eyes bright with mockery. Of course I had to reverse my reply immediately. Otherwise life wouldn't have been worth living. He had enjoyed hearing from me the Adult School men's recent animadversions on the subject of religion, their emphasis on action rather than talk, on Christain practice rather than on theological theory. And now like the hypocrites of all time I was repudiating my principles when my chance came to construct. His look said, "Any fool can destroy; to create takes a person."

So the next time I went to Bow I gave the men his message. It wasn't likely that suitable premises would be quickly available. I was comforted by this thought. But a day or two later two of the men hurried in with the local postman. He had found the place, a disused hall, an old strict and particular Baptist chapel that had come on the market recently, known as Zion Chapel, situated in a back street which was little more than a blind alley.

What a job, to turn a Strict and Particular Baptist Chapel into a pub! When we got the keys and examined it, we found its creed had

been left behind in a neat pile in the vestry. Of the first three beliefs required in this church, two were denials. "I deny that salvation is free" and "I deny that Jesus Christ died for all men." I expect those who worshipped here were infinitely nearer to God than those printed words implied, but we had no compunction in installing a heating system and burning the creed in its furnace, taking out the pews, bartering them for chairs, putting in a bar counter.

To our great comfort, Mary Hughes of Whitechapel offered to come and help us. That lifted the load considerably. Any one who knows *Tom Brown's School Days* can make a guess as to the way the author, Judge Hughes, would have brought up his children. "He was always telling us that we were in God's lowest class because we had so much and so many people waited on us and served us. In service lies greatness." Mary Hughes often repeated these words when she took some new friend to call on her in the tiny bedroom over the kitchen at Kingsley Hall. "There's no need for a fire," she often assures me. "I'm always burning with indignation at the wrongs inflicted on the dispossessed. Feel me." She stretches out her hand. It is hot in the coldest weather. I have never known her to get a new dress. The ten-year-old one can be turned again. That will enable a neighbour's child to have a holiday. She cuts a chunk off a brown loaf and drinks cocoa made with no milk. She tramps the streets, a diminutive figure weighed down by a big canvas bag in which leaflets containing clinching arguments and the latest statistics on every imaginable human problem are stored ready to give away to any one who tries to evade objective truths by "airy, fairy" sentiment.

In the other little room lived Rosa Waugh, whose father, Benjamin Waugh, was the founder of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and whose brother-in-law was Sir William Clarke Hall, known by the lovely title, "The Children's Magistrate." After a few months, Rosa married Stephen Hobhouse, a brilliant scholar who for years had been living in a workman's dwelling in Hoxton.

The night before Kingsley Hall was opened, it was difficult to imagine how the public meeting could take place. The drainage had only just been finished. Piles of gravel remained on the floor. As a dozen of us anxiously surveyed the scene, some one seized a shovel.

The rest of us found implements of various sorts, and before midnight the place was cleaned, scrubbed, and orderly, ready for the crowded audience that always collects hopefully when a new venture starts. The opening and the Sunday evening meeting were satisfactory.

It was immediately before opening the doors for the first night of the pub that my nerve failed me. I set out from No. 60, remembered I'd forgotten pen, ink-pots, paper, and envelopes, which surely any self-respecting communal parlour would provide, dispatched some one to purchase them. Then, as I threaded my way through the ill-lit streets, the whole complicated venture suddenly rose up like a black, suffocating fog in front of my eyes; and I, who scarcely ever enjoyed the luxury of a tear even at the most poignant moment of a play, began to weep in the dark. But one cannot open a teetotal pub in the teeth of strong disapproval and widespread prophecy of failure with a damp handkerchief and a blotchy face. I had to stop.

Throughout the evening, billiards, cards, draughts, and chess kept people occupied and happy. The refreshment bar did much business. There was the requisite buzz of conversation to banish self-consciousness. Ben Platten and George Bowtle, who had come up from Loughton, there and then gave the whole of themselves to the work. The Committee of the General Workers' Union had provided eight of their most trusted members to do the stewarding and look after the thousand and one details to be considered in a place where any human being over eighteen may enter. The last quarter of an hour was reserved for dancing. At 10 P.M. the public house chant was raised, "Time, gentlemen, please. Time!" The place quickly cleared and the group of us who had started this lusty infant on its life stared at one another, a little amazed, very thankful, determined never to worry again.

So started Kingsley Hall twenty-two years ago. It was a great idea, the people's own. Trying to clothe an idea in bricks and mortar may disillusion many. Creative ardent spirits prove to be mere creatures of flesh and blood. We worked very hard and we were sincere, but we have nothing to boast of. It is not too good a show. Yet, the creative fire that founded the Hall has never been extinguished. We have had great adventures in failure, joy, love, and danger.

Kingsley Hall was not the outcome of any streak of sentimentalism, of pitying charity. It was an overdue act of justice, recognized as such by all connected with it. Everybody must have a decent place wherein to spend the evenings. A one- or two-roomed home does not supply that need. Kingsley Hall came into existence to do so. In that it has succeeded. But an evening meeting-place is not a sufficient end in itself. We knew that all the time. We hoped the other good things—serenity, health, fellowship, service, tolerance, appreciation, self-respect, regard for others, a social conscience, courage, a sense of public duty, and reliability—would follow. But they don't come because one wants them to. They don't spring into existence as a result of seeing the lack of these qualities in other institutions and in other people whom we dislike or of whom we are jealous. None of these necessary things is forthcoming except by self-discipline, by refusing the second best (sometimes called self-sacrifice), by becoming the devotee of a Cause or a Lord.

So Kingsley Hall has its numerous friends, its adequate supply of normal, cheery, jolly members, its compact blessed and devoted little group of local volunteer helpers, past and present. But its seers, its saints and prophets, are a long time appearing.

CHAPTER VI

War

THE first casualty in every war is truth. Those who are aware of this remain obstinately sceptical about news, prophecy of speedy victory, propaganda lectures, atrocity stories and glamorous magazine articles which describe the suddenly acquired saintliness of the nation's defenders. The obstinately sceptical person is unpopular, and knows it. That makes him worse. I remember the politely silent, almost tangible exasperation I evoked from a long tableful of guests at a Devonshire Hydro one day when a bit of good news from the Flanders front had just been announced. There was little enough to announce, goodness knows, and on holiday people are surely entitled to their little pleasures. The brightness of their countenances suddenly faded when I croaked out warningly, "Is that official?" "Oh, Muriel, really!" ejaculated the friend who had brought the news. She was a remarkably sweet-tempered person. Those words perhaps marked her greatest lapse from serenity during the season.

At Kingsley Hall we refused to pray for victory, knowing that a victor's peace is usually vindictive and stirs up a passion for revenge a generation or so later. Such a stand meant that for the duration of war we could not sing "God save the King." The fourth line, "Send him victorious!" sung in peace-time can be interpreted to mean the conquest of slums, disease, ignorance. In war-time it implies killing, wounding, gassing, starving, lying, spying, drinking, and venereal disease.

Many of the factory girls who regularly ate at the Kingsley Hall Dinner Club were munition workers. "Don't you get tired?" one was asked. Her answer has stayed with me. "Tired? Oh, sometimes. But when we do we say to ourselves: 'Think about your work. What are you making? Shells to kill Germans with. They've killed our men, now these will kill them.' "

The East End has for so long given harbour to unpopular causes

that tolerance is the fashion there. But to see a new place opened where people talked of Germans as their brothers was too great a strain on some of the neighbours. I received an anonymous letter informing me that I went about with other women's husbands, that I'd got a German face, that if I showed it down A Street they'd "do me in." A Street proved duller than its word. When I perambulated up and down it, nothing happened.

On Sunday mornings we used to hold open-air meetings at the Dock Gates, pointing out that war was an unscientific way of trying to settle anything; that as cannibalism, chattel slavery, blood-feuds and duelling had one by one been recognized as foolish, old-fashioned, an insult to God and man, so war was an outmoded custom and a daily crucifixion of Christ. We could not suddenly look upon our brother man as an enemy just because he chanced to have been born the other side of a river or a strip of sea.

But if East London tolerated such sentiments, Loughton was a neighbourhood of a different temper. As one saw acquaintances approaching, one had to decide whether to greet them and risk the cut direct, or whether to turn down a side street and avoid all chance of mutual embarrassment. I wish I could apologize to some Loughton folk now for the tactless, awkward things I'm sure I often said. To be outside an almost universally accepted emotion of enthusiasm, forcing oneself to witness to an unpopular truth for four and a half years nourishes the growth of an extra-hardened skin. One cultivates a certain grim ruthlessness. I'm sure some of us pacifists must have appeared maddeningly superior in our refusal to accept the comfort, the cheer, and the national self-justification so generously provided by an ever-watchful government. Even a skeleton sermon with carefully chosen hymns to match was issued to clergy and ministers. I wish I'd kept a copy. The hymn was "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide," and the sermon was intended to produce increased investment in war loan bonds. I forget the text.

In December, 1914, a hundred or so Christians of all sects met in Cambridge, drawn together by the immovable conviction that a nation cannot wage war to the glory of God. The doctrine of the Cross, self-giving, self-suffering, forgiveness, is the exact opposite of the

doctrine of armies and navies. One must choose between the sword and the Cross. Thus the Fellowship of Reconciliation was formed, providing us with anchorage as well as with a chart for all adventuring.

During the war many women were economically better off than they had ever been. The Separation Allowance was regulated according to the number of children in the family. Incomes were graded on a common-sense basis. Children in Bow acquired adequate clothing. Boots and shoes were always to be had. Something like independence was achieved.

As a moratorium had been arranged with the Women's Suffrage Movement, Sylvia Parkhurst was set free. She settled down in North Bow and fought on several fronts at once. She rented a public house that had lost its licence, called it the Mother's Arms instead of the King's Arms, set up a centre for milk distribution, a *crêche* and a nursery school. She ran a series of public meetings indoors and out, and published a weekly paper, the *Woman's Dreadnought.* This carried a column one could not afford to miss. It was a *résumé* of all the speeches that had been made in Parliament during the previous seven days which referred to women. Once a week, Sylvia would sit up all night, ploughing her persistent way through Hansard's voluminous reports. That was heroism.

We were fortunate in our leaders. There was Julia Scurr, Susan Lawrence, Maude Royden, and Mrs. Despard. Mrs. Despard's straight back and soldierly carriage reminded one of her brother, Sir John French, the Commander-in-chief of the forces. As she addressed our Sunday night meeting her dark eyes fiery under heavy white hair, our faith was strengthened by her uncompromising pacifism. I found her once in the midst of a riot in Victoria Park. She was surrounded by yelling, maddened hooligans, shaking their fists at her, threatening her life. She was facing them quietly, aloof, unperturbed. Every now and then she would repeat one sentence, "You can kill me, but you cannot hurt me."

One thing always leads to another at Kingsley Hall. That sounds like a self-evident statement, but its grim truth surprised me. I had never realized that if you do a single definite thing, you may be bound by that thing henceforward for always. The Germans have

a proverb indicating the same horrifying fact, "If you say A, you must also say B." Kingsley Hall started simply enough as a teetotal pub, but it kept involving us in movements, providing us with friends who expected much, committing us to fresh personal responsibilities. It attracted all sorts of people with ideas; each idea engrossed its originator, who took it for granted that I would help work it out. And at first I thought I must.

For instance, a very good and generous friend said: "Why not have a river picnic? I'll provide a launch for the day. It holds one hundred. Just charge the people a shilling each and put it in your funds." It sounded so easy. The Kingsley Hall members were so delighted that it would have been churlish to refuse. But soon complications ensued. "Members want to bring their friends. May they?" I was asked. "How are we to prepare the picnic tea when the launch has no tea-urn?" "Can children come, too?" "Supposing people want to bring beer and whisky on board, may they?" "Do children get their tea half price?" I began to rebel. Their tea? What tea? Whose tea? Why should everyone take it for granted that tea was going to be provided? Why should I fuss about a tea-urn? Soon the phone started ringing. A message came from unknown friends of some member who desired me to find him and tell him that they wouldn't be able to come, after all, and might they have their money back? This nightmare of a river picnic was only one bright idea of one bright subscriber, occurring one day of one bright summer.

The effort to respond to everyone's eager expectations overwhelmed me. My heart began to do all sorts of funny things. It seemed occasionally to jump about inside of me. Sometimes it missed a beat, sometimes raced like an engine, sometimes felt as though it were falling, a cold stone down a steep and narrow well. Then several doctors took matters in hand and I had to go home, stay there, get up at ten, go to bed at nine, walk for hours in the forest alone, go upstairs only three times a day. As soon as the doctor got me stronger and allowed me the narrowest latitude, a tea party or the mild excitement of a concert, I was as bad as ever. This lasted for eight months. At the end of that time I was told by my dear masseuse who sought me

out twice a week and did her best for me, that I would never be any better. It was my temperament, she said. I enjoyed things too much.

This ruthless pronouncement was about the best thing that ever happened to me. It forced me to face facts. And I had to ask myself some searching questions. What sort of disorderly universe was this in which the person who most enjoyed things was incapacitated thereby? Or was it I that was disorderly? Immoderate? If my masseuse were right, it would prove God's craftsmanship to be very poor. What would one think of an engineer who produced machines that were liable to break down whenever they performed their proper function? I had blandly accepted the fact of my heart having gone on strike. I had expected cure to arrive mechanically, as long as I obeyed orders and swallowed medicines. Now I realized that something much more fundamental was involved and I had got to face it at once.

As soon as the masseuse left and my rest period was over, I got up, dressed, threw on a cloak, and went out into the garden. It was a dank, misty November day, late afternoon. I roamed round and round the tennis-lawn, head bent, eyes on the ground, trying to see straight, trying to analyse the source of my weakness and of power. I remember gazing at the moist, dark green winter moss that had spread parasitically over the gravel paths. It seemed to match my mood. I don't know how long that perambulation lasted. As the darkness engulfed me, I knew only one thing, that there could be no respite from struggle until I had somehow discovered how to harness my own puny, unreliable spirit to the Eternal Spirit. The effort was so agonizing that it phrased itself memorably. I felt as though I were "crawling about on the floor of hell." To make any effort is distressing after eight months of being waited on. I suppose I'd become spiritually flabby, too.

Eventually I knew what I must do. My masseuse's depressing philosophy could not be disproven by argument, only by accomplishment. I was not going to let my temperament become my downfall. I was very lucky to have been born with the knack of enjoying things. The point where it had become a source of weakness instead of health was the crux of the whole matter. I had inherited from God and my

parents a thoroughly sound constitution. I had taken it for granted and used it to exhaustion point carrying out my Bow program of work, instead of realizing that work is not an end in itself. It is one's way of doing it that counts, one's way of life. An accomplishment may be technically quite correct but its value is *nil* unless in the doing of it one keeps near the source of all beauty, truth, and goodness.

The creative spirit of God, whose orderliness, rhythm, and reliability are at the very heart of the universe, upholds life in all creatures. It is the source of our delight, our physical strength, our imaginative powers, our energy and stability. My whole being was a part of God, and whatever effort or pleasure or struggle or bit of responsibility I undertook was His responsibility, not mine. My jerky breathing, my heart's fluttering, unreliable career were all of a piece with the way my toes would curl up inside my shoes as I watched the crisis of a play or reached the climax of a novel. Each was an indication that I had got unhitched, somehow, from the source of strength and serenity.

Somewhere I had read that the power and life-giving qualities of the great Gulf Stream can flow through the channel of a single straw if the straw is set in the right direction. I must realize that with every breath I drew I was actually breathing in the spirit of God. His great creative spirit was also the re-creative spirit. I must consciously coöperate with "that unseen Power which is ever moulding men and things to higher uses." I mustn't strive to hold steadfast control over myself in a difficult situation. I must let go and imperturbably watch God dealing with it. That's an exciting and often a super-humourous situation. One's energy and joy must come direct from God. Then they are continually renewed. What a contrast between the old idea and the new practice! The firm, reliable, rhythmic flow of the Eternal Spirit and the tense, screwed-up, compartmentalized experience of a busy schedule!

So next day I began the new discipline, and in a month I was well and went back to work. But it wasn't quite so easy as it sounds. I think nothing but that preposterous challenge to one's whole philosophy of life would have kept me at the job. I wondered if my masseuse had administered the means of my cure with her wise eyes

open. The technique I worked out dragged me away every afternoon from whatever conversation, book, or amusement I was absorbed in. I had to go upstairs alone into a locked room for one hour and practise relaxation. I lay on my back on the bed or on the floor, and emulated the limpness of a kitten by the fireside, or of a sleeping child. The tautened nerves must be made to loose their hold on the muscles. The muscles must be coped with specifically, one set at a time. The hand that so readily screwed up its fingers and clenched its fist must be made to lie on the bed, half open and inert. The foot muscles must be released, and the tightly held toe muscles; then the face muscles, specially those round the eyes and mouth. By this time the hands have screwed up again and the process must be repeated. Feebly at first, a feeling of intrinsic well-being began to assert itself, a sense of restfulness. Perhaps it would take some fifteen minutes before relaxation was acquired.

Then came leisure enough to notice one's breathing. I didn't try to regulate it. I merely made myself notice how it was becoming slower and slower, deeper and more regular, until the sense of well-being was complete.

Many similes can be used to describe the effect of the process. Imagine the surface of a garden bed in August; the earth is dry, pale, and prickly to the touch. A shower falls. The earth becomes dark brown, smooth, and beautiful. A delightful odour exudes from it. Imagine a piece of over-strained elastic or a bit of yesterday's ill-preserved lettuce that has no resilience and can no longer perform its function. Imagine a shaky old bicycle with a punctured tire. One has no wherewithal to repair it. The journey must be accomplished. There is haste. One pedals on with a flat tire, riding on the rims. That is how one may live and fall ill.

But imagine the deep waters of a turbulent sea. Their depth does not destroy you. You are on a raft actually upheld by the salt waves. Imagine, too, a pond frozen over at its brink and children eagerly waiting to skate. Before they are allowed to start, men go all round the edge of the pond with axes, hacking at the ice to detach it from the earth. It is safer when the floating sheet relies only on the buoyant water, not cleaving at all to the encompassing land.

Strangely interesting that the expression on a face when its muscles are relaxed is a smile! Study the face of the dead when the nerves have ceased functioning and the muscles are no longer drawn into lines of pain.

After half an hour or more, when serenity and a sense of well-being are established, you can begin to utilize the new force. Quietly, rhythmically, to match your breathing, such words as these may repeat themselves in your mind:

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Life certainly becomes new when you have made yourself love what God loves; sinners, drunks, traitors, enemies, members of an inferior race. But you can get the Spirit of God on no terms but His own. Jerky, irregular heart action is free to develop as soon as you get contorted with pride, scorn, or anger. One by one the people you fear, despise, love, or worry about come into your mind. Let them stay there until they are linked with God. "Breathe on them, breath of God." Repeat the prayer for each of them, leisurely, quietly, without making a sound. "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." See each of these people awaking into new life. At the end of the hour, you get up as from a bed of roses. You feel you could jump over a house. You proceed to join in the ordinary life belowstairs without apprehension.

Of course I lapsed often enough during the day. Sometimes I wrought myself up with fear or pride, but such things tend to lose their hold over one in proportion to one's practice of the presence of God. So it's just a common-sense, mathematical affair each of us has to work out for himself. The only difficult effort in the whole technique is dragging oneself away from pleasant company or some engrossing job to take the hour's practice. One's extraordinary facility in thinking up new excuses as to why on this particular day of days one need not undergo the discipline, is soon recognized as humorous. Sometimes my excuse was that I felt so free from all taint of weak-

ness or weariness, so very much alive and alert, that it seemed pure folly to go and lie down. On these occasions I would generally find myself physically aching with weariness after the first fifteen or twenty minutes of relaxation.

It was fun to go back to Bow quite well in a few weeks and find how useful this experience had been.

The day came when the *Lusitania* was sunk. It's a devastating spectacle, the sudden disappearance of any ship. At one moment, where the blue of sea and sky seem to touch, a vessel proudly cuts the waves. At the next, it isn't there. The sea is calm, untroubled as ever. After an hour or so some half-drowned people are dragged up on to the pier.

A certain newspaper incited the populace to passion point. That afternoon riots broke out in various parts of London. In Bow a gang of roughs led by a stranger attacked one shop after another belonging to people of German or Austrian extraction, leaving behind smashed windows, empty storerooms, and in some cases gutted houses. Suddenly our friendly streets became sinister, horrible, a welter of maddened people. From the upper-storey window of one shop, pieces of furniture slid down the stout canvas blind until they reached the wooden frame at the bottom and ricocheted into the crowded street below. So mad was the scene that a heavy sofa and a wardrobe were shot down by the same method into the crowd. People ran off with fifty-pound bags of flour on their backs. The police did nothing. A frightened German woman came out into the street, eager to get away unnoticed. Her nervousness attracted attention. Harpies jeered at her, tweaked her hat, grabbed at her purse. While I remonstrated with the women for being cowardly enough to attack three against one, my young companion slipped off with the German unnoticed. In the excitement and heat of argument, the women dragged my hat off, too, though, according to the custom of those days, it was fastened on with a long and serviceable pin. Rather clever of them! At this the policeman who had been serenely eating an orange as he walked up and down, carefully taking no notice of what was occurring, precipitately crossed the road and with a great show of determination laid a hand on my shoulder. "Come along now! We can't have none of this," he exclaimed, and piloted me homewards.

That night my hat was returned to me anonymously, wrapped up decently in white tissue paper.

I asked a parson who was conducting an open-air service one Sunday if he could not include the Germans in our prayers. He explained confidentially that it would be dangerous. I made the obvious retort. He replied that the crowd might tear us limb from limb. I asked if Paul modified his good news out of a forethoughtful estimation of what the crowd in Ephesus might do to him. The parson was very angry and lectured me at length. I deserved it. Though it was always terribly difficult for me to start talking to people like him, once I'd started I'm sure I was unpleasantly logical, no doubt thoroughly perky, too.

A violinist, Brother Ernest Newland Smith, a romantic figure, arrived at No. 60. It was his custom to play to West End audiences at receptions and concerts, and then stand humbly at some thronged street corner, get out his fiddle, and play to casual passers-by. Very often his music would lead him into conversation with those who stood by about the love of God. We were proud when he accepted our invitation to make Bow his headquarters for a time. As he entered our tiny room, he paused at the door, gazed round, and exclaimed, "Do you come to the East End to make a beautiful room like this?"

There was a worn string carpet, a sofa minus one leg, dark, dull-red curtains across the window that did not meet, a cheap, modern gate-legged table, four chairs to match it, an old chest, a bronze statuette, called "Aspiration," of a man with wings fastened onto his own shoulders, and a plaster figure of blessed Saint Christopher. We liked Brother Ernest more than ever.

In 1916 air raids began. Every glimmer of light had to be carefully kept within doors or else one was a proven spy, practising collusion with the Kaiser. Arriving at No. 60 alone after dark presented some difficulty. Curtain rods were amateurish affairs, and one had to grope about in the dark for some time before all the peepholes were draped and gas might be lit.

We became accustomed to the siren's hoot round about 2 A.M. Then in thousands of homes came the hurried awakening of the children. Mothers snatched up the baby, joined the preoccupied stream

of people hastening to the official dugout, and disposed of their family according to age, laying them in rows on or under the tables. The hours were whiled away by song and story.

One night Kingsley Hall was shattered by a bomb. This fact counteracted some of our unpopularity. "Ain't that just like the old Kaiser?" inquired one of the crowd who were allowed by the police to come in one at a time to survey the havoc wrought. "Shocking to bomb a religious place like this!" It enlarged our sorely shrunken self-respect to find that the public deemed us religious.

It was a strange experience to be out alone when a raid was in progress. Once I was in a London suburb, unlit except by the moon. The streets were empty, the zeppelins overhead. As all cover is more or less futile except a dugout, I knew I was in no greater danger than the unseen silent people so close to me within the shuttered shops. Yet the instinct to get underneath something is so strong that I had to exert all my strength to resist the impulse to run under the only available shelter, which was a glass-covered arcade.

As the zeppelins seemed to choose our neighbourhood as their regular route, the men formed themselves into an association to protect the women and children from needless anxiety. They used a room at Kingsley Hall for their headquarters, drew up a rota for "Watchers and Warners," elected their captain, and dubbed themselves the Kingsley Watch Patrol. Mingling pleasure and duty in proper British fashion, they would sit up all night talking and smoking extra-strong tobacco which came in clouds directly out of their windows into our upstairs bedroom. They received news by telephone when a raid was imminent and would quickly disperse to rouse the neighbours, reassuring people by their preparedness. One night they went off to perform this duty so promptly that only the hall door left open and letting in a draught gave Doris, asleep upstairs, warning that anything untoward was in the air.

Once we saw a raider hit. Watching its flaming descent, who could help feeling glad it could do no harm? Yet what horror for its occupants! One of our neighbours expressed the deep down reliable goodness of the human race as I sat by her kitchen fire one morning. We were enjoying a talk over a cup of tea. She said in a meditative

voice: "When you come to think of it, Miss, those Germans in the zepps, you carn't blame 'em. They're only made to do it, same as our men are, pore devils!" I heard another woman give voice to the same objective sort of sentiment. She was enjoying a confidential mood, rarely encouraged in the mother of a big family. "You know," she started, diffidently, "about those Germans, they're killing our men, I know; but our men are doing the same to them. And every German we kill is only some pore mother's son."

Daylight raids developed later and were much more unpleasant. I was taking fifteen of our boys and girls to a children's matinée in the West End when in the far distance I saw what looked like a group of shimmering butterflies. It was difficult to keep the children's eyes averted and at the same time induce them to walk fast enough to gain the cover of the theatre before the graceful visitors reached Shaftesbury Avenue. In another raid, a bomb fell on one of the local schools. Some eighteen boys and girls, children of six and seven, were killed.

At Loughton, when the nocturnal visitors drew attention to themselves, Father would turn over in bed and go to sleep again. Mother insisted on getting up. As Doris and I, whichever of us was at home, shared her room to keep the fire going, we had to get up, too. She would put on enough clothes to rid sudden flight of any imagined awkwardness, collect some money, jewels, and keys; then we would sit on the beds and talk, I sidling off to the window to have a look at the raiders whenever her vigilance waned. As soon as they were out of earshot, the ritual of tea-making began. Whether we were at home or abroad, Mother's *ménage* went with her. There was a little tea-caddy of Sheffield plate, a spirit stove, a small brown teapot, cream-coloured cups and saucers bordered with country-cottage flowers and slender, graceful Italian teaspoons. The milk was brought up every evening in case of a raid. It was the cosiest meal. She would give me a cup to take to Father, though he might be sound asleep. Mother couldn't easily believe that anybody might not like what she liked. Once an abscess formed in my ear, and I was groaning away like the coward I am, when an air raid started. That was the only time Mother let me stay in bed.

Mother and I were very close to each other. We made each other laugh more easily than any one else could. We were so completely devoted to each other that I could not imagine how life could be lived or any joy salvaged when she died. And the doctor had just told me she must die. She had angina pectoris, and it was a race, he said, between her heart and time. It might last two years, it might give up in six months. We went on with our absurd little jokes, our beloved double patience, our *Cranford*, Jane Austen, and Anthony Trollope, our complete and unbounded confidence in each other. The instant her breathing became irregular, I knew it long before she did, though I might be on the other side of the room. Then I had to remind her of doctor's orders to "put her heart in a sling," which meant to put her feet up level with her body.

She was the most faithful friend any one could have. She liked little things, birds, flowers, babies. She had cokernut and suet hung up in the garden near the drawing-room to attract the blue tits. One morning as I was playing Mozart's "Fantasia" and Sonata in C minor for her pleasure and my own, she beckoned Father into the room. I noticed them standing there, intent on something I could not discern. All the windows and the garden door were flung wide. The birds, appreciating Mozart, had collected together in our trees and were swelling such a mighty chorus that when the piano was suddenly silent, the air was filled with the paean of their song.

In 1916 conscription was instituted. A good many of my friends refused to become part of the military machine. This meant stating the grounds of their objection before a public tribunal and possibly being given exemption on the grounds of religion. There was always an army officer in attendance to try to prove that following Christ and killing people were compatible. He generally quoted from the Bible and sometimes got rather tied up in his theology. After all, a good disciplinarian is not supposed to be particularly nimble witted and he often embarked on his cross-questioning without realizing the intellectual calibre of the man who stood before him.

My days were now diversified by accompanying friends to tribunals, attending the subsequent proceedings, and visiting them in jail. Some-

times there were wives and families to see to and money to be collected for their maintenance.

It was distressing to notice one after another of these pacifists deteriorate mentally during a prison sentence. Their monthly letters were strange compositions. The sentences rambled on disconnectedly and petered out altogether. Happily on release they usually reverted to normality. Because so many alert socially-minded citizens were serving time in various jails, a good deal of valuable information about prison life and its effect on the ordinary criminal became public property. Was it sensible to keep them so short of water that their plate, knife, fork, and spoon had to be washed in the water they used for personal ablutions? Why forbid photographs of mother, father, wife and children? What was wrong with flowers that they should be so strictly forbidden? During his half-hour's exercise, a man I knew espied a tiny plant growing in a cranny of the high-walled prison yard. He delighted in its growth, unperceived by officialdom. Each day he looked out for it. One morning, its buds were just beginning to blossom. The next day it was gone, torn out. In official eyes it was an irregularity.

The worst time of all in prison is when an execution is being prepared. I do not think any one who has not experienced it can imagine the sense of strain that grips everyone alike—visitor, porter, warden, and inmates. Repressed horror or assumed nonchalance, which is worse? I only know that for days afterwards I did not feel normal. I can never forget the young man who was lying in his cell, trying to read a comic paper and pretending he wasn't thinking about the other youth of twenty-two who was to be shuffled out of life the following day.

CHAPTER VII

Dregs of War

HOUSEKEEPING was a difficulty. A quarter-of-a-pound pat of butter assumed even in luxurious homes an almost worshipful significance. Cream was unprocurable. Where there was a family of youngsters it was smoother sailing for the housekeeper to let each have his week's ration of sugar and butter in his own bowl and dish and consume it as he liked, according to temperament. One would "last it out"; another would mark Sundays with a more generous spread; a third would economize rigorously until the day before the new coupons were available, and then fling all restrictions to the wind. Of course there were the noble ones who took saccharine, pretending they liked it, and gave away their sugar supply. We regularly received that sort of bounty for the building up of delicate children in Bow. The standard of living in the East End was already so low that most mothers could not afford to pay for the full amount of food allowed by their coupons. It was humiliating indeed when a neighbour with a family of growing boys and girls offered me their unused coupons.

Perhaps the chief advantage that accrued to East End folk from the rationing system was the abolishing of shopping queues. "Lining up" outside the butchers, the grocers, and the greengrocers had wasted many hours each week. It was a strain and a danger to health in a climate like ours to stand so long waiting one's turn to be served. The women with their superb humour turned it into a joke. On a bleak December day, it took one woman four hours to reach the door of the greengrocer's shop where potatoes, our cheapest foodstuff, were on sale. Then she found they were sold out. She had to make her way homeward empty-handed except for the baby in her arms.

I was responsible for three kitchens; the Loughton one, where we paid ten cents for an egg; the Dinner Club for factory girls at Kings-

ley Hall, where the whole meal had to be under fifteen cents; and No. 60, where our ex-factory-girl helper could always be depended on to work miracles. We became so accustomed to her genius that, I'm afraid, we took it for granted. How mean and poor-spirited an attitude that is! and how one longs to rectify it when the benefactor is gone beyond reach!

The coal shortage was such that at Loughton we had to eat our meals in the drawing-room. Everybody in those days was trying new dishes, hoping to make a little nourishment go a long way. One discovered edible portions of plants hitherto discarded. A newspaper correspondent enquired why we ate the small, compact sticks of rhubarb and threw away the luxuriant supply of spreading green leaves. Enthusiasm for the idea spread. I waited cannily to see if any ill effects were reported before putting it on our menu. Just as I was reassured and about to give it to the family, we heard of the havoc it had wrought, even death in one case.

The doctor's predicted limit of two years for Mother's life had been passed. I thought perhaps I need not have shivered for so long in the cold dread of impending loss. Then, in July, 1918, she had a stroke. Throughout a woeful week, time seemed to stand still. As we took turns at sitting in her room, we hoped that Death was just outside the door. I yearned for him to enter, praising him, inviting him. Towards the three windows of Mother's room a great generous redwood had always stretched out friendly arms. I found myself watching it by the hour, watching, waiting. . . .

> Ah! sad and strange! as in dark summer dawns
> The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
> To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
> The casement slowly grows a glimmering square.

Once when I thought her asleep she began to speak in a low-toned, mournful voice. She was gazing into the far corner of the room, where she thought she saw the grandchildren playing together, evidently quarreling. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she watched, and she kept murmuring, "But little children must love one another."

In a few days the most radiant person I've ever known was re-

leased. I felt no other happening could ever again have power to give me pain.

The following month I received a letter from a teacher in a Yorkshire boarding-school, asking me if she could come and see Kingsley Hall. She wanted to do social work. We invited her to stay a week. She came, contracted mumps, and remained thirteen years. Alice Muriel Pullen became like one of the family. Father christened her Mary Jane and Mary Jane she has been ever since. Her eyes were like Mother's. Her coming was one of our biggest blessings.

The Armistice suddenly burst upon the world. On November 11th, our newspaper carried a border round the columns of each page, a decoration of a single sentence repeated again and again, "Killing has stopped. Killing has stopped." As I had caught Mary Jane's mumps and was convalescing in the garden at Loughton, I missed all the celebrations. No longer to hear distant gunfire, no longer imaginatively to feel the stinging rip of a bullet, the thrust of steel through flesh and nerves, the suffocation of gas, to see the shops becoming normal and displaying unlimited chocolate cream, this was bliss.

Short lived, of course, for news soon came of the hunger across Europe. We found our boys were being used to keep up the naval blockade. As a result, our defeated enemies were threatened with starvation. We listened to the reports of eye-witnesses, journalists, and others who had gone to find out the facts of the situation. Mr. H. W. Nevinson told us that he could not finish his inspection of the children's ward in a central European hospital. He had faced many a danger when, years previously, he had been on the track of the slave-raiders in Africa, but he couldn't face any more of those children. They were hunger patients. At whichever cot he paused, the same thing happened. Its small occupant, cheeks flushed, eyes bright with fever, would turn to him, gazing eagerly, expecting food which didn't come.

Kingsley Hall made this attempt. We called on newspaper editors who proved surprisingly loth to publish the facts or to make an appeal for ex-enemy children. "It would not be popular," confessed the representative of a great national weekly. We lobbied members of Parliament. We begged ministers and clergy to use their influence in

making known documentary evidence with which we supplied them. We collected money from our members and neighbours. People gave a good deal. One old lady, a great nature-lover, withdrew the three shillings she had taken five months to pay in to a club for her annual day in the country, and put it into our collection-box without a word. No one would have known of her act if I had not chanced to meet her in the street after the excursion char-à-bancs had started off from Bow in all their glory, a cornet-player on the step behind, moaning out old-fashioned melodies en route.

Kingsley Hall folk adopted an Austrian child, Marie. Her presence in his house completely converted one of Horatio Bottomley's devotees. Till then he had believed the leading articles in the *John Bull* of that day, even when they declared that "the just decrees of a righteous God would bring this Judas race before the bar of human justice." It is a little disconcerting to find that the only member of a "Judas race" one knows is small, gentle, affectionate, and unassuming and hasn't had enough food for a long time.[1]

As our progress was too slow for the emergency, and the newspapers would not co-operate, we decided to turn our bodies into living newspapers and to walk the streets of London from east to west, bearing posters high above our heads which should contain an epitome of the facts. We set out one day, a company of women in single file, dressed in mourning, accompanied by one or two of our own children, making for the House of Commons. Many thousands read the placards as we passed. We had kept them strictly factual, such as, "In one maternity ward, 98 out of 100 babies born since the Armistice have died for want of milk." The last said, "It is not the will of your Father in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

The Sunday after the signing of the Peace Treaty in 1919 I went through an ordeal. An open-air meeting had been arranged by some King's Weigh House friends for 8 P.M. in Hyde Park. I was to be the speaker. As I stood there waiting to begin, I longed passionately that the fate of Lucius Curtius might befall me. I remember gazing at the ground in front of me so desperately that it almost seemed I was boring a hole in it. Once the meeting started, all was well. I

[1] For further details, see *Kill or Cure*, Cokesbury Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

tried to tell the truth about war. Soldiers in khaki listened eagerly. I heard later one of them had turned to his mate at the conclusion and said, "That girl's talking sense."

The Khaki election was on us with the government's ridiculous slogan, "Hang the Kaiser!" I took a sort of vow with myself that in every speech I made for various socialist candidates, I would give publicity to what was happening in the Rhineland area occupied by French African troops. Here the future history of Europe was being prepared. Here the essential nature of war was being demonstrated. Here were little German towns, some of them without a brothel, being forced to set one of their houses aside for that purpose and to provide sufficient women to satisfy the sex hunger of the victorious soldiers. At first the burgomasters refused to obey these orders of the French High Command. One of them tore the requisition form that had been presented for his signature from top to bottom and threw it on the ground. Unmoved and immovable, the Frenchman presented a duplicate copy to the mayor, coldly informing him that it would be better to sign lest something worse befell the city. When the mayor ascertained the implication of his threat, he signed the paper to the accompaniment of church bells tolling as for a dirge.

The physical violence of man versus man, however crude, proves bearable, thinkable. But to turn victory into violence against women, a physical and psychological mastery, and to call it peace, is to begin a process that must destroy human joy. When our women's societies sent in their passionate protests to the government, those responsible expressed regret that nothing could be done and explained that their authority did not extend to the area of Germany occupied by the French.

Visitors from other parts of Germany came to this unhappy district and discovered its shame with a horror that soon turned to hate, fury, and a passion for revenge. Among them, they say, was a young man called Hitler. Though our government said that nothing could be done for women in German regions over which they had no authority, they were finding plenty to do ostensibly for women in another country over which they had no control at all. Over fifty million pounds sterling was spent in undeclared warfare to further the plans

of Koltchak, Deniken and Wrangel. To induce war-weary men to volunteer for campaigns in the frozen north, heart-rending stories were told about the plight of women in Russia and how they were being commercialized.

Throughout the war we clung to the conviction that there were people in Germany and Austria holding the same pacifist faith as our own. As soon as the frontiers were opened, we sent emissaries to find out if our faith were justified. It was, and soon the Fellowship of Reconciliation became established in most European countries. The Dutch group had already been founded during the war by Cornelis Boeke and his wife, *née* Eleanor Cadbury. Since the formation of the Fellowship at Cambridge in 1914, these two had contributed to the movement humour, music, and the flame of the spirit, until a jingo press campaign in 1917 succeeded in getting them banished as undesirable aliens. It was sad to be deprived of Cornelis' fiddle; it had beguiled long hours in our Bow dugout during an air raid. He had the gift of getting at one's spirit. But probably Holland needed him more than we did and God let the wrath even of the *Daily Mail* serve the cause of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Cornelis sought out a convenient site, found a lovely stretch of pine woods near Utrecht, and settled there with his family of little girls. When he had earned his right to be trusted by the people of the city, they formed their pacifist movement, calling it The Brotherhood of Christ. The workmen employed to build its chapter house in the pine woods soon realized they were working on no ordinary job. They were helping clothe a great idea in form, in well-laid bricks, in good plumbing, and in woodwork painted bright blue, purple, red, and yellow. Cornelis soon lost his liberty. Accustomed to free speech in Britain, he determined to work for it in his own country. He was arrested in the middle of the open-air meeting he had called. As soon as his prison sentence was completed, he went back to the same place to start another meeting. The authorities were the first to grow tired of this often-repeated process.

I went to this Brotherhood Chapter House in 1920, along with a hundred or two other people from fourteen countries, for the second annual conference of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

The very elements were in our favour; the warm summer afternoons, the pine's aroma, the shining silver sand, the spacious stretch of forest.

This was my first contact with the enemy. As I sat down and gazed round me at these unknown people, a bearded old Austrian professor in a black velvet coat brought me a cup of tea. Pain, witnessed or endured, had stamped his every feature. Had he too watched hunger patients? It was difficult to swallow that tea.

Afterwards, while exploring the garden, I found great big Pierre Ceresole, secretary of the International. He introduced me to one of his fellow countrymen, a village schoolmaster, saying, "This is the man who showed the way to all of us in Switzerland. The schoolmaster and I walked through the woods till the pine shadows grew very long. After doing conscript service for years, he suddenly realized that it was no longer possible for him to stay in the army and at the same time read his Bible and say his prayers. When he told his commanding officer so, he was sent to a lunatic asylum for a month or two. How could any one but a lunatic refuse conscript service in Switzerland where it is an honour rather than a danger to be a soldier? Palpably sane, he had then been court-martialled in Lausanne. The Town Hall was crowded for the strange trial. He was imprisoned, but right across Switzerland the pacifist idea flashed like lightning. The movement was now in full swing.

An international conference is very wearing. The continuous translation of every speech, question, and notice into two other languages tends to dissipate one's initial enthusiasm. But music played its customary rôle, refreshing and unifying us. Our book of songs and hymns provided three parallel columns of languages, and we sang with ardour and abandon.

There was a different sort of music, however, produced by one of our members. Perhaps it expressed better than anything else our sense of inner serenity. A Roman Catholic priest in his early thirties, an Austrian, chanced to find an empty room with a piano. Here he would sing and play the perfect music of a Bach Chorale while people gathered silently about him, sitting on the floor or outside the windows, or by the garden door. As I listened I found myself wondering what extra thing God could provide even in Heaven. The priest

could speak no English. Yet later on when he came to stay with us in Bow, a curious thing happened. We had been holding our regular open-air meeting in Hyde Park his first night in London. All at once he was missing from our bench. Peering below the trees and among the crowd, I spied him at length, standing on the last platform of the long row, talking to a crowd of Londoners in Esperanto. Where his strange words failed to register on their minds, the illumined serenity of his face held their spirit.

Six or seven members of the General Workers' Union had been giving their services every week to Kingsley Hall. As they did their jobs of stewarding, stoking, clearing, keeping order, looking after the billiard table, I began to understand something of the selfless devotion that lay behind the history of that great trade union. The banner of the local branch was a noticeable bit of work. It portrayed various symbols of brotherhood, painted or appliquéd onto a rich blue-and-silver satin background. Rolling and unrolling its thirty square feet of colour was almost a ritual. Whenever it was loaned to us for some special occasion, the hands of the old workman who was responsible for its safe-keeping were manifestly tender towards it. I was proud to be allowed to join the union.

Soon a struggle for better hours and more adequate pay drew the railway men out on strike. They asked me to address their open-air meeting in Reeves Road. Although they knew the entire situation better than I, some of the ablest workmen were still inarticulate, and our family has too obviously the gift of the gab. It was real joy to be accepted and trusted by this valiant, anxious crowd. As I finished my speech and steadying hands were helping me descend from the rickety platform, one of the older men gripped my hand and muttered in a gruff voice, with a look of serene satisfaction, "Come and 'ave a wet, mate." Inside his kitchen, the kettle was already singing on the hob and his wife had everything set out for tea.

The troubles in Ireland grew worse. All sorts of horrible things were reported as a result of the "Black-and-Tan" régime. Unfortunately, they could not merely be disregarded as nationalist propaganda; we grew more and more ashamed. Then Mr. Sheehy Skeffington, the humanitarian, the pacifist, the good citizen, going out into

the streets of Dublin to try to moderate the rage and bitterness of his fellow countrymen, was arrested and shot by a young English officer. What H. W. Nevinson calls "the stage army of the good" turned out again to parade round Parliament Square, holding banners of protest and displaying items of news from Ireland, such as the daily press would not publish. A few of us decided that we would hold a public meeting in the forbidden zone outside the House of Commons, be arrested and in this way create opportunities for publicity in court. We had made all necessary personal arrangements prior to a sojourn in jail and were just about to set up our open-air platform when we suddenly got news that the particular issue on which we were basing our protest was settled. We all had to go tamely home. After extended propaganda, Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington arrived in London. How we crowded the halls to hear her! She was our guest at No. 60, and till late at night she sat up with us, answering questions. She seemed quite free of bitterness. Her husband's murderer, she thought, had a streak of madness in him. Certainly he was a religious fanatic. He had ordered her husband to kneel and pray before his death. There were several other victims of his ultra-Protestant zeal. Some months after her husband's death, the "Black and Tans" had broken into her house as she was bathing the children. One put the cold steel of his bayonet against the child's naked body, his clumsy way of joking she supposed. The child had not been frightened, but the incident had stirred the old anguish and fear in her. She couldn't help feeling a little sorry for these "Black and Tan" intruders, these lonely English boys who could find no self-respecting Irish girls to make friends with.

Then Joan Waterlow, after finishing her moral science course at Newnham, came to Bow. She was a delicate girl. One of her ambitions was to live in a house where one could go in and out of the kitchen as one liked. In No. 60, the kitchen was impossible to avoid. She had had little appetite in her luxurious home, but found our food so plain and spare that she soon developed a normal interest in anything edible. Various specialists had examined her, consulting together about her case. They said she would never be able to take an

ordinary job, just a little easy manual work in the open air, perhaps. She started in at Bow to clean and cook, to type and keep accounts, to deal with all the correspondence, to share the responsibility of clubs, classes, services, and Sunday-school at Kingsley Hall. It was a boon to have nothing more to do with account-keeping, especially with Kingsley Hall accounts, which were by now beginning to assume intimidating intricacies. She shared our home at Loughton, greatly enriching us; she knitted stockings and made clothes for herself and me. We roamed through the forest at all hours; slept out in the garden at night; listened to Beethoven, Mozart, and Wagner on the gramophone; gave tennis parties and forest picnics where society people, intelligentsia, factory girls, and coffee-stall keepers mixed happily. Perhaps best of all was the joy Joan brought to Father. Ours was fast becoming a synthetic family.

Beyond our garden fence stood a roomy wooden cottage in a charming garden with a field adjoining. Father and Doris bought this property, christened it Rachel Cottage out of love for Mother, and furnished it for the benefit of Bow folk. Its big wooden shed was turned into a "House of Quiet" and was kept open for all passers-by to come in and pray and meditate. The general committee of the Fellowship of Reconciliation consisted of twenty-five men and women gathered from all parts of Great Britain. It held its quarterly meeting at Chingford the very week the cottage was ready for use. Five or six of its spiritual giants declared they would gladly take the long walk across the forest from Chingford to Loughton after the committee meeting, nor would they object to getting up early next morning from the beds I would provide for them in order to dedicate Rachel Cottage to the glory of God and the service of man; of course they would be happy to breakfast afterwards with the Bow people who would have risen much earlier than they to come down and attend the little ceremony. The committeemen were well rewarded by nightingales filling the air with song as we tramped through the forest glades that night. Our path lay along the grassy avenue where Queen Elizabeth often rode when she stayed at her hunting-box in Chingford. Her little house is stared almost out of countenance now by

the garish Victorian public house built in fake Tudor style a few yards away.

After that day, Rachel Cottage was the anteroom of paradise for hundreds of East Enders. On bank holidays, children would often arrive before breakfast was over. Their empty jam-pots were filled with the curious things they had found "in various nooks beneath the pool." They developed a technique for losing the last train home. One group brought down some sugar in a biscuit-tin, gathered unripe blackberries, and made themselves jam over an illegal fire, using the tin as a preserving-pan.

Up in Bow when bank holidays seemed a long way off, we would make up a party of a dozen or so and walk all night. We got to the outskirts of the forest just as it was time to turn back. Once after a long walk we turned into the cottage at three-thirty in the morning and went to bed, tired and happy. I was just climbing into bed, the rest were already asleep, when something amazing happened. It must have occurred a myriad times but never before to me. The silence of the night faltered. The air stirred, grew vocal. The birds awoke to the day which none but they could discern. Their song was like a mighty chorus.

We began to hear about a man called Gandhi; a casual mention of his name in the press, at first; then more regular references to his movements. Soon an admixture of scorn, bitterness, admiration and disapproval proclaimed his growing power. We were lucky enough to get hold of a fat volume containing fifty-two weekly issues of his paper, *Young India*. We eagerly devoured it. Here was a great man, acting out on a world stage the same principles that we nobodies had been trying to live out in various towns and villages in England. In India, millions of people were conditioned to non-violence by religion, society, and tradition throughout the centuries. We, an adolescent race, had inherited the fighting tradition and been nurtured in it by school, literature, drama, art, sport, and church. In India, the power of non-violence was being mobilized for a great patriotic and national purpose, obvious to everybody, for freedom. We in England were inevitably accused of lack of patriotism, and our actions con-

strued as harmful to the body politic. In India newspapers were given a new lease of life by the upthrust of this message of Gandhi, his call to the people of every province to bestir themselves and to claim the blessing of freedom, God's gift to every people. Our movement was naturally ignored by the press.

CHAPTER VIII

Voluntary Poverty

ROSA WAUGH HOBHOUSE brought the phrase "voluntary poverty" into common parlance. She denied that poverty was the right word to denote the condition of her neighbours in Hoxton or of mine in Bow. She said they were living in compulsory want. It was the great privilege of Christians to practice voluntary poverty. It was the precondition of serenity, the only means by which one could attain fellowship with the vast majority of citizens, limited and inhibited as they are by penury. These millions of dispossessed were our concern, not to be thought of as our field of activity or the recipients of our bounty whose ignorance we must dispel, but people better educated than we in the facts of life, whose faith had been tested by more fiery ordeals than ours, many of them with a surer grasp of essentials, a more Godlike generosity of spirit, greater freedom from self-pity and a capacity to hope long past the limit of rationality.

Stephen and Rosa, some time after their marriage, diverted the whole of their income of £250 into channels of service to the community and entrusted its disposal to four of their friends. The income, abandoned on the grounds that it was only legally, and not morally, theirs, was known as the Restitution Fund.[1]

As for myself, it was becoming ever clearer that I shared responsibility for those millions of dispossessed who have left the churches. The middle-class habit of draping the Eastern Carpenter in white Sunday clothes and putting Him in a coloured window instead of bothering to discover what the Joiners' Union is doing for its members today, has much to answer for. That may well constitute our crisis at the Judgment Day. From our malodorous quarters among the goats we may challenge the Supreme Court as to the grounds of its decision, but

[1] At Rosa's request, I add that although the fund persisted for about eight years, difficulties at length assumed proportions which led to a reluctant return of its use for private purposes, purposes which, however, still embrace public service.

surely we shall be reminded, as were the goats in the parable, that our downfall is due to our own romantic egotism which leads us to evade the stubborn practicality in Jesus' words about the "eye of a needle." If we had not shown such humorously indecent haste in protesting that the dilemma of the rich young man did not apply to our so different selves, we might by now be enjoying fulness of life without being haunted by fear, shame, and conscience pangs.

Christians are always having to face the wide gap between their conduct in church and in business, between their faith and their works. Some of our local firms in Bow were owned by Christians who did not trouble to find out how their employees' minds worked. There was the firm which issued pious Christmas cards to its employees just at the moment when they were smarting under a sense of deep resentment; there were foremen in other firms who levied from the men a payment of half a crown a week for the privilege of being allowed to work; there was the firm whose head preached publicly on total abstinence while one of his products was sold to brewers as a beer preservative; and the firm which, bored with the onus of choosing a dozen dockers out of a crowd of applicants, flung among the men twelve metal tokens permitting them to work. How deeply ashamed were the dock labourers if the sudden necessity to grab, catch, or snatch, inadvertently developed into a fight! For many years they tried to change this method of recruiting casual labour at the docks. The employers proclaimed themselves unable to curb these evils. Even if we accepted that defeatist statement, it did not relieve us, the possessing class, of our responsibility. We had built up the system. We were its chief beneficiaries.

Except for the fear of legal consequences, we would not long remain in possession of our jewels and satin gowns while the majority of our neighbours were lacking in blankets; nor keep up five houses in different parts of the country while in each of those areas were families living, eight, ten, and twelve to a room; nor enjoy seven-course dinners, with vintages appropriate to each course, while children were short of milk.

It would be a distortion of our sense of the fitness of things if in a

desert-island story the hero, after bringing the shipwrecked party safely to shore and building log-houses for them with conspicuous resourcefulness, proceeded regularly to appropriate for himself more than his share of the common stock of salvaged food. Yet that keeps happening all round us.

Since, as a pacifist, I had given up my right to armed protection, I tried to envisage the situation if I were to tell the Bow people that I repudiated the right to my possessions; that they could take them if they liked; that I could easily go away and earn my living. My guess was that they would ask me to stay, settle upon me a modest income on which to live in continued service, and put the rest of my money to some communal use.

This fascinating problem had been exercising my mind for years. I had repeatedly told my father that whatever he left me in his will would probably go to the people of Bow. Occasionally he thought out schemes for tying it up in such a way that I could not disinherit myself. But for the most part I think he was amused and mildly interested. He had already settled enough property[1] upon Doris and me to cover our food and rent and incidental expenses while in Bow. As a fact, it stretched much further than that and paid for the housekeeping bills of several helpers, too. As for clothes, doctors, dentists, and so forth, all their bills were paid by my father.

In 1921 Rosa Hobhouse, Mary Hughes, and I felt that the time had come to issue an invitation to the general public to consider the economic basis of their lives. Notices were sent to the press[2] in the following terms:

> We know those who cannot obtain adequate clothing, sheets and warm covering, or necessary food for their children and themselves. The poverty which we refer to is commonly known as a state of privation or destitution. But we prefer to call this condition of theirs compulsory want, being brought upon them by force of hard circumstances. Our invitation to you is not into this enforced

[1] Though it was and is completely our own, we have never considered or used it as such. It helps run Kingsley Hall and provides Doris and me with stamps, newspapers, train fares, meals when we are out etc.

[2] The *Daily News*, now the *News Chronicle*, was generous with its space in four different issues.

poverty, but into a very glorious alternative, involving a drastic readjustment in your affairs, called voluntary poverty.

We invite you into this condition, that the needs of others, whether in our country or abroad, may generously be supplied by the overflowing of your treasure. We do not here wish to encourage the charity of patronage, but rather the large charity of God, which rejoices in richly providing.

Nor do we desire to indicate the exact consequences of the step into voluntary poverty, into which we invite you. It will suffice to say we have many visions of possible blessing, derived from intimate contact with the sorrows of the oppressed.

The signatories invite those interested to a meeting at Kingsley Hall, Bow, next Monday afternoon.

It was an interesting meeting that Rosa took charge of, and it was heartening to see the men and women who gathered together. A day or two later pictures appeared in the morning paper of Rosa cleaning the windows in her workman's dwelling at Hoxton. The *Evening Standard* sent a man down to Bow for an interview out of which he made a full-page article on the middle page. One of my sisters was greatly perturbed at reading it. She disliked some of the remarks I had made. Some of them, of course, I hadn't made, but one ought not to expect the dull accuracy of a photograph from the mind of a creative journalist.

This publicity brought numerous letters and some unexpected visitors to Bow. One of them was a woman who said she couldn't bear to think that an evening dress was not always available for such as I. She was a skilled needlewoman, a lady's maid out of a place for the moment, and had come armed with the tools of her trade to make a gown for me if only I could find some material. I was sorry I could not.

We were sitting at dinner in No. 60 a few days later when a stranger knocked, an elderly man with grizzled hair, looking rather worn. He had walked eight miles to reach us. He had been sleeping out on a bench the previous night, as he often did when out of a job. At dawn he got up to walk off the stiffness and cold. He was feeling pretty wretched. Then a torn page of newspaper on the ground caught his eye. He picked it up, found the middle page of the *Evening Standard*,

liked the sound of our movement, and decided to come and see us. We gladly made a place for him at the table. He seemed happy to be with us, but ate little. We did not press him, because a full stomach is painful after fasting. The meal was something of a sacrament, unforgettable. His quiet, steadfast air brought us somehow nearer reality.

Soon a number of people, eager to see Christ manifested in the economic sphere found a worthy leader in Bernard Walke, the rector of an old church in a remote village on the Cornish coast. He had been working out an idea of a brotherhood based on the economic significance of the communion table, where there is no specially favoured guest, no head or foot of the table, where Christ is the unseen Host of all who care to come. There is no lack or shortage, however many may partake. The economists assure us that there is a plenitude in this world of everything we need, enough raw materials to supply food, clothing, and fuel for every member of the human race. We recognize this as God's gift, for all men richly to enjoy. His gifts obviously are not intended for us to snatch and quarrel and fight over, but to be distributed sensibly. Is it anything but ridiculous to act as though the beneficent processes of nature were ordained to provide fortunes for a few individuals?

> Half the world is sick, fat with excess:
> The other half as that poor stranger passed us even now
> Who thanked us for our crust with tears.[1]

Some dozen of us East Enders who held these views formed a Chapter at Bow under Bernard Walke's suggested title, *The Brethren of the Common Table.*[2] We met once a month. We took no vows. We only promised to be honest and confess the measure of our greed and of our need. We found it the hardest thing we had ever done, so hard that we had to start with worship. Only through silent prayer during

[1] I was walking down the Mile End Road one day when the cold was so intense that even at my rapid stride I could scarcely keep warm. I passed an old lady on the way to get her weekly allowance. One foot was wrapped round with odd bits of paper and sacking and tied up like some unsightly parcel with string. From this string a bit of tape stretched, its other end fastened round her wrist. Her progress was slow enough to freeze her blood. After every step she had to stand still and pull at the tape to bring her other foot far enough forward to make the next step possible.

[2] See Appendix II.

which we tried to think like God could we acquire the grace of straightforward, honest, direct statement. Among our number was an heiress or two, a curate, a writer, a teacher, a dog-biscuit packer, an out-of-work carpenter, a dock labourer, a young widow on relief, and a journeyman printer. We each had to own up in turn as to how much we had earned or received during the past month and exactly how we had spent it. Those who had a surplus laid it on the table in front of us. Those who needed extra took it. It was *de rigueur* not to say "thank you," because we held that it was no longer the owner's property if he did not need it. Therefore it wasn't a gift, but the proper possession of the needy. We took as our slogan, "The only Christian, the only rational basis for the distribution of goods is need."

The obvious thing happened to us. From very shame of confessing, one lowered one's weekly expenditure on self. After hearing an unemployed dock labourer's wife give every item of the family budget for the previous month, one noticed that fruit did not exist in their household, and vegetables were rarely seen. Milk was scarce and then only canned.

When I had worn out my accumulated stock of clothes and needed a new pair of kid gloves, it was distressing to contemplate reporting such a purchase. Obviously gloves were not needed in summer-time. Yet to me it was unthinkable to go down Regent Street without them. Could it be done? It took weeks to make up my mind to take this horrible step. Filled with a sense of crisis and feeling undressed, I strode down the street. No one seemed to have noticed. I soon learned to limit my expenditure on clothes to ten shillings per week, though it wasn't easy, as I am apparently unique in my ability to wear holes in stockings. Happily, however, darned and patched clothes don't trouble me. I soon found coats put me into debt for so many weeks ahead that I took to wearing a cape, which is an easy garment to get made and does not go out of fashion. After a little experimenting I found that the ten shillings a week could cover all personal expenditure, though this meant that I could give no more presents. I told my family and my friends to stop buying birthday and Christmas gifts for me. Subscriptions had to shrink to nothing, and soon I found myself looking forward to the

arrival of parcels of cast-off clothes which long ago I had solicited from relations for sale among the Kingsley Hall members. It surprised me to find how toothpaste, handkerchiefs, and shampoo powder ate into one's allowance. "Going to the hairdresser" became a luxury of extremely rare occurrence.

Those of us who had a surplus income soon got rid of it. It was jolly seeing the children of the group looking stronger. Now what about capital? A thousand pounds was put by one member at the disposal of a new international school in Switzerland. Another sum helped finance the election expenses of a labour candidate who afterwards made history, and that of a sort we did not care for. Another fairly large sum saved a labour newspaper from liquidation. One of its columns regularly abused Christianity, but its news service was good and it kept the public aware of what was happening among the people of other countries. Six hundred pounds was given to the treasurer of the newly-formed "Save the Children Fund," which was doing grand work for war victims all over Europe. Then came the consideration of jewels. There were a few lovely things in our possession, a string of pearls, a paste brooch supposed to have belonged to Louis Quinze. We decided that these should be enjoyed by us all. Violet Lansbury kept them for us at 39 Bow Road in a blue-velvet box. But when the Russian famine occurred a couple of years later, we could not find it in our hearts to keep the precious things, and they were sold for food.

This monthly discipline, this bondage to account-keeping, this attitude of blatant publicity about expenditure, had the desired effect. It got rid of the false secretiveness about one's financial position that helps to invest money with an almost sacrosanct atmosphere. Some people feel a genteel sensitiveness about taking money, scarcely liking to handle it, insisting on whatever payment is due to them being enclosed in an envelope, or paid in paper rather than in metal. Such people would have been shocked, perhaps nerve racked, in a company like ours. But many have envied our freedom from care and have asked how they could set up some such group themselves.

Probably the most important warning one can give is not to start with only middle-class people. Such tend to become too meticulous.

On several occasions we middle-class members were saved from finicky particularism by the rough-and-ready sanity of the working-people. For instance, the curate, in reporting his budget one month, said, "And then I'm afraid I spent half a crown on a ticket for the Russian Ballet." The poorest woman present leaned forward, and studied his face critically.

"Young man," she said, "why d'you say you're afraid you spent it?"

"Because I'm rather ashamed when there's such a shortage among the members," he answered.

"But didn't you enjoy the Ballet?" she persisted.

"Very much indeed," he said.

"Well," she retorted, "now you can tell us all about it, and we can enjoy it, too."

The Brethren of the Common Table was by no means the only group launching out about this time on experiments in personal economics. Our friend Vera Pragnell decided that she had no right to her financial inheritance. With it she bought a well-wooded tract of land in Sussex, tore down the fences, the barbed wire, and the "Trespassers will be prosecuted" notices. She wrote up instead "Free to the Public." Many a tramp was given new heart and hope by finding her cottage. She kept a light burning all night inside the open door leading to the guest-room. A tray of food and a drawer full of clean clothes were always ready.

Then "Neighbours, Limited" was founded by the economist, Jack Bellerbe. Neighbours do not keep for their own use more than the average income of an English citizen. The rest of their income, earned or unearned, goes into a common fund for educational purposes. Their own children may benefit by this; the country at large certainly does. The first Peace Ballot extending over selected typical London and country areas was financed from this fund.

Rosa Hobhouse used to say, "We are skimming the cream off the children's milk."

Saint Ambrose said:

> That which is taken by thee beyond what would suffice to thee, is taken by violence. . . . It is the bread of the hungry thou

keepest, it is the clothing of the naked thou lockest up; the money thou buriest is the redemption of the wretched.

Saint Thomas Aquinas said:

If a man has more than he actually needs, and some one else is in need, the property belongs to the man in need, and he has a right to take it . . . by stealing if necessary."

CHAPTER IX

On Being an Alderman

THERE are twenty-four metropolitan boroughs in London. The Borough Council is the elected authority responsible for sanitation, public health, housing, maternity, child welfare, libraries, swimming-baths, roads, markets, public washhouses, conveniences, and sewerage. Out of the rates it levies on local property certain sums are paid over to the Metropolitan Water Board, to the Metropolitan Police, and to the London County Council for the maintenance of schools, fever hospitals, mental hospitals, tramways, parks, special housing schemes, fire brigades, and other social services. Much the largest sum of money, however, is ear-marked for the care of the poor, the sick, and the unemployed. Out-relief is paid to those too old to work if they have relations or friends with whom they could lodge. Otherwise there only remains the workhouse, where, fed, clothed, washed, and numbered, one easily becomes sub-human. A casual ward is provided in each borough for the indigent, homes for orphan or deserted children, a hospital for the sick poor.

Bow constitutes a part, roughly one-third, of the Borough of Poplar. Our infantile mortality rate was high, the financial burden caused by the relief of our poor was the heaviest of all the boroughs. Yet the ratable value of our property was the lowest. Westminster's ratable value was over eight times as high as ours. Whereas an extra penny in the pound rate on property in Westminster produced £32,058, in Poplar it produced £3,771.

At the end of the war came the municipal elections in which Labour swept the polls in many boroughs. George Lansbury, our beloved Member of Parliament, now also became our first Socialist mayor, with thirty-five Labour supporters and a Conservative opposition of only six. We began to plan for setting up the kingdom of heaven! The Maternity and Child Welfare Act had just been put upon the statute Book at Westminster. This law made possible far-reaching improve-

ments if energetically administered. Some local authorities in various parts of the country were not prepared to work it to its fullest capacity, but we East Enders had some thirty years of civic education behind us. A set of reliable people were appointed on the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of the Borough Council, most of them women, nearly all working-people, determined to safeguard the lives of the children committed to their care.

Unemployment, unknown for five years, was becoming rife once more. Our Borough Council after long and careful consideration decided on a policy which evoked obloquy and fear from the unimaginative rich. The councillors decided that the standard of living should not be allowed to drop to the unhealthy low level which we had known in the past, that destitution and disease should not be thus encouraged, anyhow in Poplar Our total expenditure on the poor assumed formidable proportions. Our Borough Council argued that unemployment was not a local but a national problem, precipitated by war, and aggravated by the terms of the Versailles Treaty and other Government acts. Because we let France take several trainloads of coal free every day out of the Ruhr, not only would German labour approximate to slave conditions, but our own colliers in Wales would be unable to buy our London industrial products. Because the Indian nationalist leaders were antagonized, irritated, snubbed, and spied on by the servants of our imperialists, they refused to buy our products, preferring those of any country to Britain's.

So Poplar's rates soared to 25 shillings in the pound. The landlords passed on the burden to us tenants and we paid, gritting our teeth and knowing that something must soon be going to happen.

Since pre-war days, there had been a steady pressure of enlightened public opinion upon Government to equalize the rates of London. The Poor Rate, so solid Liberals had argued, should not bear with such heavy incidence on the East End boroughs. As Westminster, Kensington, the City and other rich boroughs were served by the denizens of the poor boroughs who drove their trains, kept their drains in order, unloaded their fruit at the docks, and manufactured their household goods, they should pay more towards their welfare.

For years deputations urging this had been gravely received, and

their requests docketed. A measure of relief had been granted in 1894 when every borough was obliged to contribute something to an equalization fund, about sixpence in the pound. Such a sum was obviously insufficient. When another rise in the rates appeared imminent, our Poplar Borough Councillors publicly declared that they would not sanction it. As the Government refused to take action to enlarge our receipts from the Common Poor Fund, we must take action ourselves. We would not risk lowering our people's health. We determined that our expenditure on the poor should continue, but as a result we would be unable to pay our annual share of the expenses of the Metropolitan Police Force, nor could we meet our bill for water due to the Metropolitan Water Board, nor could we afford to pay the London County Council for the luxury of education. We were proud of our schools and of our children's aptitude for learning, but physical health came first and it depended on food, housing, and fuel, which we had to provide. We could not meet our liabilities incurred in fever hospitals and mental asylums conducted by the Metropolitan Asylums' Board.

To refuse to pay the precepts legally due from us was an exciting gesture. The population was proud of its Borough Council's courage. They knew that the processes of law immediately set in motion would eventually land them in jail for contempt of court. Enthusiasm was widespread.

So the mayor and several members of Parliament, some twenty-six men and women in all, went to Brixton or Holloway Prison. They were arrested at various hours and on different days, but as each Councillor was apprehended, the citizens' pride and approval grew greater—cheering crowds filled the streets. It was all great fun. It also meant something very real and solid.

For the most part, working-people are inarticulate. They can rarely explain their hopes, aspirations, and principles, But this time there was a clear issue to present to the world. Those twenty-six men and women accepted incarceration to symbolize the principle that persons are more valuable than property, the community more important than private gain. This is not to suggest that those twenty-six were saints, but we were conscious that our rate battle of 1921 was a high-water mark of citizenship.

Those in authority apparently expected the prisoners to give way after a few weeks, but they wouldn't. On only one condition would they give up their intransigence and sign the checks for the unpaid precepts, and that was that the Common Poor Fund be substantially enlarged by contributions from the rich Boroughs.

An impasse occurred. Neither side would give way. The poor Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, taking his holiday in the Highlands of Scotland, was pursued from loch to loch, from hotel to hotel, by a deputation of London mayors, all Labour men, who were trying to make him face the issue. We voting citizens of Poplar likened our imprisoned mayor to St. Paul, who embarrassed another Imperialist government by refusing to come out of jail until he had gained his point.

After about nine weeks it was decided to push a bill through Parliament, called the Metropolitan Borough (financial provisions) Act which permitted the charging on the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund of all the expenditure on outdoor relief and increased the allowance for indoor poor from fivepence per day per head to one shilling and threepence. The expenditure on outdoor relief was thus equalized throughout London. In addition the local authorities were to be allowed to borrow money in anticipation of the expected receipt from the Fund and to charge the interest of such borrowings on the Fund. This brought over £450,000 annually into our coffers, and relieved Poplar's rates by more than ten shillings in the pound, and every other poor Borough benefited proportionately.

There was one casualty. Alderman Minnie Lansbury, George Lansbury's daughter-in-law, Edgar's wife, contracted some throat trouble during her incarceration and died soon after her release. It was to take her place that I was nominated to the alderman's seat. But I never took her place. I hadn't her grasp of affairs, her whole-time devotion, her vivacious and wonderful knack of getting things done. I was a passable stop-gap for four and a half years' service, nothing more. I think my splendid and experienced fellow Councillors recognized that my chief contribution would be to "stand up to" the army of critics who spoke and wrote as though we were anarchists, to reply in their own language to the superior Oxford-voiced, almost supercilious, argu-

ments put forward from time to time by permanent Government officials.

I was made chairman of the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee. Of course we were proud of our numerous clinics. We were the first local authority to set up dental clinics for mothers. These and the new artificial-sunlight clinic improved the health of our babies. We distributed free milk wherever the total family income was below a certain scale approved by the Ministry of Health, and it cost us £5,000 to do it. Our infant-mortality rate dropped from the highest to the lowest in all London. Then, one afternoon in committee, a Government order was received requiring us to cut down our expenditure on these services. We stoutly refused. As chairman I proposed a resolution, stating that as it was against our conscience to reduce the milk supply by a single half-pint, we refused to obey the new regulation. One official, the only man present, profoundly objected to our action and his efforts to talk down the resolution extended for several minutes. Of course we women enjoyed the struggle. When at last he paused for breath, the resolution was put, seconded, and passed unanimously. The Ministry of Health sent for us and we went up to Whitehall, reinforced by most of the Councillors, including our four M. P.'s. The Ministry also had marshalled its forces in battle array. I felt sorry for the doctor who had been roped in by them, surely involuntarily. But a Government official has to obey. An awkward thing to have to back up arguments to prove that milk for children was not so important, after all.

They began by reminding us that it was no wish of theirs to curtail our expenditure, but when the Treasury orders economy, there is nothing to do but obey. We countered by reminding them that whenever an economy policy is ordered, the War Office and the Admiralty always find some reason for not obeying and we hoped our action would furnish the Ministry of Health with an excuse for taking the same line.

To and fro the polite arguments sped. It was good fun, for we knew that in no circumstances would we give way. The last question fell to my lot as chairman of the committee to answer. One could not have chosen a more apt finale. "Can you tell us why," inquired the suave

voice, "when every other local authority throughout the country has accepted the unfortunate necessity of curtailing expenditure on maternity and child welfare, you alone have refused?" "I think I can," I answered in mild tones. "It's because ours is the only Maternity and Child Welfare Committee composed wholly of people who themselves live down the same streets and alleys as the children. We can see them every day. We should have to watch them growing pale and thin and weak if the milk grant were to be lowered."

Three weeks later we heard that we had won. The five thousand pounds expenditure was to continue. It is a dangerous thing, however, to rest on one's laurels. At the next committee we staked a further claim. We sent in a requisition for a further grant to permit us to provide Grade A Tuberculin Tested milk, instead of the ordinary brand, for our delicate children. Although this was expensive enough to be debarred from the average middle-class table, our claim was allowed.

These four and a half years have been compressed fairly stringently to confine them within the limits of a few pages. It was at the beginning of this period that I was induced by Paul Gliddon, of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, to speak every week at open-air meetings in Hyde Park. For two and a half years I pursued this great and exhilarating game. What agony I suffered during the hours immediately preceding each meeting! What elation once I'd got going! One starts talking to a dog, a lamp-post, and one's companion who makes a valiant attempt to appear a stranger arrested in the act of passing by. Park *habitués* stroll up, stare, listen critically, and then either drift off to the next platform, twelve feet away, to test the oratory there, or, scenting the chance of some good brisk heckling at the end of the address, they settle down to listen intelligently. Sightseers and strangers join the group, diffidently, poised as though ready for flight at the first intimation of either atheism or evangelistic appeal. A drunk interrupts some important statistical information. The good-humoured crowd knows how to deal with the situation. At first they ignore him and advise the speaker to do so. If he proves persistent they growl at him, or make some humorous remark at his expense calculated to drive him either to silence or to quit. If he is too far gone to react in the proper

way to these tactics, some self-sacrificing person will edge up to him, engage him in conversation, showering such flattering personal attention upon him that he is led step by step out of the circle, to where his animadversions upon the universe lead to no anti-social effects. At the end of the forty-minute speech comes question time. That is where a sort of intoxication threatens the speaker and definite steps have to be taken to moderate it. My subject was always the same, something that had occurred during the week, published in the news columns devoted to foreign affairs, argued out in Parliament or seen down our street in Bow. We examined the happening critically instead of accepting it as part of the natural order of things. We would analyse it, considering how it might appear in the sight of God, and draw our conclusions as to its significance according to its eventual effect on the coming generation.

All the usual anti-religious traps were prepared for me, ingenuously introduced. The misquotation of the words of Jesus about the poor and about the coming of another world war were generally in evidence. We rarely missed the amusingly naïve justification of military preparedness by reference to the bit of plaited cord with which Jesus shepherded the gentle sacrificial beasts out of the temple courts where they surely never wished to be penned. Very often too, the question was asked: "Which should one concentrate on first, the conversion of the individual sinner so that he may change his manner of living, or the improvement of social conditions so that the individual shall have the opportunity to improve?" One became accustomed to the expression of childish triumph on the faces of such academic hecklers. It seemed almost heartless to evade their little dilemma and ask them why not do both things at once? They looked quite nonplussed, almost hurt, by such vulgar realism. When the superficial questions were well over, we would get down to fundamentals. Then quite often the human spirit, diverse, sincere, and steadfast in its longing for God would stand revealed. We would separate long after dark—unknown as to names, dwelling-place, or politics, but trusting each other. After a time the meeting took on some of the features of an open-air church. During the week, this sense of loyalty and solidarity would gradually evaporate, and by the time I climbed on the bus the following Tues-

day for an hour's jolt to the West End I had lost all feeling about the meeting except a vague sense of wretchedness. Carrying the platform the half-mile to the Park did not tend to improve matters. It was a collapsible wooden affair. Its legs were supposed to fold up and remain tautly fastened to its sides, but they always came adrift and flapped aganist my own and my companions' and, alas! sometimes against passers-by. When the contraption was safely erected in our pitch, I knew the horrid hour had arrived. I remember once setting myself on the lowest step of the platform, facing the green of the Park, with my back to where the crowd would be. I gazed into the foliage of the Park's fine trees, not with an eye to inspiration or delight, but caught in a miserable mist of spiritual bankruptcy. What have I to give to these people? Plenty, if we could sit and talk quietly together, one at a time or in groups; but facing a crowd, where one must be as alert as a winged dandelion seed in the spring breeze? The silly questions need one sort of treatment, the sincere questions another. The high calling of a speaker is to justify the ways of God to man, and I'm certainly not properly prepared. I have a wealth of illustrations from my neighbours' daily lives and my own as to the unchristian nature of the social and economic system under which we all live. But I know that we need a lot more self-discipline, all of us, rich and poor, before we can create anything strong and sound enough to take the place of what we are trying to get rid of. We need to practise the presence of God, voluntary poverty, and offering the other cheek. Shall I be able to get that across to a crowd? Oh, why did I come! I can't even think of an introduction, and the introduction is of the greatest importance at an open-air meeting. The main argument must not be allowed to begin for eight or nine minutes in order to give the crowd time to collect. And suppose the crowd doesn't collect, after all! At last in sheer desperation I jerked myself to my feet and turned round to climb up the rickety couple of steps. There in the twilight stood some two hundred people, quietly assembled, awaiting me, kind-eyed and with a little anxiety in their look, as though they had sensed my hesitations and self-distrust.

It was a very lovely time we had together that night.

CHAPTER X

Rats and Housing

I BEGAN to think about homes. The churches expended much time and some sentiment upon the subject of the Christian home, but seemed definitely averse to considering its material prerequisite, the house. Though the sport of church-baiting is beneath the dignity of a thinking person, being not only too easy but also too obviously a bunk-hole for those who are trying to escape from their vague sense of guilt, one had to acknowledge that young people's societies were encouraged to discuss the evils of drink, of gambling, of atheism, and of foreign sins such as untouchability, child marriage and purdah, while propaganda for better housing was dubbed political and side-tracked. Young converts and incipient church leaders mainly followed the safe course marked out by the beneficiaries of the *status quo*, who

> Compound for sins they are inclined to,
> By damning those they have no mind to.

The street in which Kingsley Hall stood was rat-infested. The rats themselves were so diseased and poisonous that the professional rat-catcher forcibly dragged his dog away from their carcasses after the kill. Mothers were anxious about their babies. It wasn't only at night that the creatures came out from their holes. One of them scampered over a young neighbour's bed in broad daylight as she lay there after confinement. In one basement home their incursions were so regular that the children were kept up each evening till the father came in; their games and quarrels and cries kept the creatures away until he could cope with them.

The small yards of three other houses adjoin the back of a butcher's shop. Sausages are made in a shed. Blood inevitably attracts Beelzebub's hosts. The law against trespass cannot be enforced so far as flies are concerned. Those three houses contained some six families.

It would have been hygienically criminal to encourage the children to stay at home. The drainage of one of these houses was so ineffective that the yard was sometimes flooded with sewage which the flies appreciated as an alternate diet.

Vermin are notoriously adaptable. Their will to live defies each of the successive invincible specifics for clearing them out of their haunts in the walls. You may tear down the homely cosy-looking wall paper and austerely colour-wash the plaster; you may bung up the cracks and holes and half-suffocate yourself with sulphur fumes in one of the two rooms which constitute your home; after two days you unseal the doors, sweep up the corpses, open the window, create a thorough draught, and start again with high hope of self-respect. Before the week is out the creatures appear again. You accept the inevitable and put aside fourpence each week, the price of a loaf of bread, to buy insecticide.

In Doris' absence, I was once asked to broadcast for Children's House. I stressed the need of such a place, citing among other things the rat-ridden homes of many of our children. Called early next morning to the telephone, I was confronted with a furious voice. Disembodied anger is aways upsetting. It's difficult to see the funny side of a mere voice. Ours was a wall telephone, and I remember how hard it was to continue standing when my knees wobbled so violently. The speaker, a Poplar gentleman, was annoyed at my factual remarks about rats. If I had talked sentiment and "sob stuff" he probably would have sent me a check. Telling ordinary facts elicits sparkling, crackling anger.

I have never regretted the radio rat speech. Soon after, a ten-foot trench was cut into our road stretching from Kingsley Hall to Children's House and new drainage pipes were laid. Rats were effectually expelled for the next ten years or so.

One of my dearest friends was a girl whose intellect, humour, and spirit matched each other. Her wisdom had come through the very common things of life. She married and her three little girls were unique. They were lucky in their home. Their skin was fine, their flesh firm, their hair an adornment. They moved like daughters of a king. But their mother died of it, of her own goodness. She had

made a Christian home in an un-Christian house. Her two rooms were the attics of a high building. Three flights of stairs had to be negotiated before water was available for drinking, cleaning, washing, and bathing; four, before facilities for emptying it away appeared.

Once more, Edith, as I write of you, I honour your strong spirit. The world needs women like you. But we let you die. You didn't mind dying, I know, but your children are far away in an official Home. Is there forgiveness for such genteel blindness as ours?

In the maternity ward of one of our East End hospitals six of the mothers lying there were homeless. They were not vagrants in the accepted sense, but respected citizens whose husbands were in full-time work. They had been evicted because the landlord's son wanted their house or because the adjacent multiple firm was expanding and had bought up the row of dwelling-houses for conversion purposes. These women had spent their time of pregnancy sleeping in licensed lodging-houses, where there is no privacy and a different bed is occupied each night, where diseased, drunken, and dissolute companions are their accepted lot.

One of the difficulties of making half a house into a whole home is that the upstairs people often have to pass through the downstairs people's kitchen in order to get to the lavatory in the yard.

The weekly "wash" is a problem in a one-room home. After the linen is clean, the drying process has to be undertaken in the kitchen. It is a chancy business, stringing cords just below the ceiling to and fro across the room. People have to dodge the wet garments as best they can. A clammy shirt sleeve suddenly cleaving to the nape of one's neck does not improve the disposition. Throughout the next day, a pile of rough-dried garments accumulate on the arm-chair, table, and dresser. Such a demoralized-looking bundle!

We set to work on the Borough Council and put up communal laundries in little back streets where a big copperful can be washed by machinery, dried and pressed in an hour or so for a shilling and two pence. At first there was difficulty about getting the machinery. An association of laundry-owners told the engineering firm which produced laundry machinery that if they sold any of it to the Poplar

Borough Council they would withdraw their custom. The threat was ignored and never carried out.

One day at Loughton I must have been looking rather lugubrious, for my father, who was then eighty-six, joined with Sir William Clarke Hall, who had been roaming the forest with us, in assuring me that things had been much worse a hundred years previously. At first I was incredulous. Then they began to cite cases. A woman was executed for stealing a loaf of bread, executed in public with crowds, including children, staring excitedly. Sunday-school outings were arranged for city churches at which the waggons would regularly stop at various public houses on their way to the country. The minister and the male teachers would visit the bar, leaving the women and children outside. They would carry drinks out to the ladies. In chapel, port was served to the preacher in the vestry before and after the service. A law was passed to protect the ears of the squeamish from being annoyed by the screams of tormented cats, skinned alive for their fur. It was generally believed that the only cure for a man with venereal disease was to hold intercourse with an innocent girl.

This sort of information could not exactly be called comforting, but it helped.

Father could always be relied on to back one up in championing the down-trodden or exploited. His life had been punctuated by excommunications, heresy hunts, and the leading of forlorn hopes. He was predisposed to like the people of Bow merely because they were poor. He never forgot that his Lord was a workman. I think he knew something about those homes in Nazareth and Bethany, something of the quality of the friends of Jesus.

When Father had his seizure, there were several days of speechlessness. As gradually he regained control; his first sentence was difficult to understand. I stooped low as he repeated it persistently. After many attempts I caught his meaning. He settled down on his pillow with deep content as I started obeying his request. "Tell me about Bow" had been the burden of his thought.

When some specially flagrant unfairness occurred, causing me to protest to the first hard-headed business man I met, whether he were relative or friend, the advice nearly always given was: "Write to the

press. Such things ought to be widely known." They always took it for granted that editors wanted such news; that I had time to write, rewrite, edit, type, and post off articles on top of a sixteen-hour schedule. This business of telling the truth about conditions presents a continual problem to me. Publicity is the only thing some people fear. An aroused public opinion has been the cause of most reforms. Telling the truth is perhaps the pacifist's only weapon. Over and over again, even the suggestion that one may publish the facts has changed a scornful, bullying opponent into an almost subservient helper. But how dangerous it is! How very soon the *tu quoque* may follow! Some long-drawn-out delay in a civil process, hesitation in the granting of a passport, a bitter anonymous attack from an unknown quarter—these and countless other harassing circumstances are the result. And even if one risk all this personal trouble, and the feeling of shame be induced by publicity and not by personal conviction of guilt, it often antagonizes the wrong-doer, paralysing his generosity.

Several times we have tried the method of personal appeal and found it potent, even on strangers. Mary Jane could not bear any longer to see the home conditions in which five of her Sunday-school children lived. She advised their mother to ask the rent-collector for sanitary repairs. Each time he was able to find some technical way of evading the provisions of the law. So Mary Jane procured the landlord's name and address and went to see him in his city office, acquainting him with the plight of the children. It was the only way to make him think of them as people rather than as rent-producing tenants.

This method is one which anybody can train himself to use. It is first taught in the ninth chapter of Acts, by a man hourly facing imprisonment at the hands of a fanatical zealot. He merely handed his problems to God and was commanded to go out, turn down Straight Street, enter the persecutor's lodgings, and tell him God had chosen him to be his chief servant. His message had strangely important results.

CHAPTER XI

The Children's House

DORIS and I made a slogan, "The best is not too good for the children of Poplar." We dragged unwilling people, who were ashamed to refuse, into the Nursery School at Kingsley Hall, pointing out the complete unsuitableness of the building, devoid as it was of a south window, the east ones letting in little light because of the high shops adjacent, the western ones inadequate by reason of wire netting, frosted glass, and soot. The visitors were always charmed by the twenty-six boys and girls at the most attractive age of two, three, and four, admired their brightly coloured pinafores, exclaimed approvingly over the rows of small wash-basins. We tried to lead them away from such easy sentiment, demanding that they consider the points of the compass and the total lack of outdoor space. They sought refuge in the good fortune of the children in being uplifted by Kingsley Hall. We sternly demanded scientific attention to a bit of realism, our best propaganda story. How did we manage to tell the same story so often? A Nursery School child had been found in an obscure corner of the hall, far away from the Montessori apparatus, remote from all his companions, sitting unnaturally still on a particular patch of floor. On analysis we discovered the cause. At that point a faint streak of sunlight penetrated the window and reached the spot. The child was enjoying the feeling as well as the look of the pale gold.

No visitors rose to our expectations. None felt the compelling force of the proposition that we must have an open-air school, or at any rate access to some garden. So we took our slogan into direct action. We started telling the comfortably-placed middle-class respected inhabitants of West Bow, where gardens still existed, that our children needed them. We tried to convince one or two denizens of Wellington Road that their homes would be improved by having twenty-six children playing, eating, and taking afternoon naps within their gar-

den walls. Two ex-mayors, a Liberal and a Socialist, considered the idea. One foresaw technical difficulties, valid ones. Another won my lasting admiration by confessing he wasn't noble enough to do his duty. Scheme after scheme fell through before Doris accepted the far from satisfactory alternative of moving the school to our diminutive back yards behind 58 and 60 Bruce Road. She had the separating fence taken down and a roomy wooden shelter erected. The children loved it, but the neighbours didn't. She hoped this improvement would satisfy His Majesty's inspectors from the Education Department, so that we might get the nursery school grant just made available by Britain's first Labour Government. But the findings of authority were not satisfactory. They pointed out that the children's environment, even out-of-doors, was not good enough. Their uninterrupted view of newly washed garments fluttering in the breeze in forty odd adjoining back yards disqualified our claim to recognition. She had pictures taken of the children, slides made, and local cinemas induced to show them plus the slogan.

Eventually Father declared himself tired of her importunity. "I'll put a place up for the children," he announced. "Arrange it as you like." Eighty-six is just the right age, apparently, to discover the best way of spending money.

At the far end of the road from Kingsley Hall a row of four rat-ridden houses stood. They had been condemned years previously as unfit for human habitation and acquired, with seven adjoining inhabited houses, by the London County Council, who planned demolition and the erection of flats or a school. They were not definitely for sale. Of course that was good labour policy. We had learned only too thoroughly the difficulties put in the way of social improvement by private ownership. Now I, a Socialist Alderman, had to start convincing London County Council members that our principle would be in this case more honoured in the breach than in the observance, a humorous situation. They kindly sold us the site.

Mr. C. Cowles Voysey was our architect. He seemed as keen about the idea as we were. London's first Children's House was to be very modern, without a single unnecessary line or curve, all its decorations being part of its structure. Every detail was talked over with the

people of Bow. The row of basins in the nursery-school bathroom must not only be low enough for a two-year-old to turn on the tap, but the constant flow of hot water, an almost unbelievable possession to Bow people, must be regulated so that from these particular taps it should never run hot enough to scald. The middle floor where the grown-ups were to live demanded as little expenditure as possible. We were only there as servants of the children. Our dining-room, study, six bedrooms and office had no rounded edges where wall and floor met, as had the children's rooms. This was rather fanatical, possibly, but we were afraid lest our sudden acquisition of a well-plumbed house might make us forget the rock whence we were hewn. It had been the work of so many plodding unadvertised years, this slow gaining of confidence, this mutual helpfulness, this friendship untainted by domination. And now our new plans for Children's House looked so imposing, so solid. The architect's drawing hung on the line at the Royal Academy. Supposing we found ourselves turning into an institution! The fear of it kept us awake at nights.

We decided to take on some regular menial task, each of us, sweeping, cleaning, floor-polishing, etc. The subtle power-bug had captured better people than we. We exchanged solemn promises to deflate each other's pride, should the Children's House ever go to our heads.

The flat roof proved a good place to sleep on, winter and summer alike. From it one could dimly see Saint Paul's Cathedral. The immediate environment was chimney-pots and squalid roofs. This was our parish. As long as we slept up there and said our prayers by the parapet, we could not forget how the will of God was being frustrated by an economic system.

We asked Mr. H. G. Wells to perform the ceremony at the opening of the House in September, 1923. He agreed and came to high tea at No. 60 to see the place. We were eager to see if he would fit into our régime, help clear up the tea table, lend a hand with the washing up as other celebrities had done. Long before tea was over, however, Joan Waterlow had introduced, somehow, the subject of Tolstoi's regular four-hours-a-day manual work. Mr. Wells disagreed with the idea in a lively manner. I suppose we all waxed lively, for though I can't

remember by what remarks the conversation developed, I do know that it ended in our suggesting to him he might write even better if he didn't concentrate on saving time and energy by letting other people perform those many necessary jobs by which life is sustained. He was very nice to us all. At the opening ceremony he declared there was only one person really fitted to open a Children's House in East London and that was Mr. Charles Chaplin.

Though I lived at Children's House for five years, my job was always with the grown-ups at Kingsley Hall. One story I must tell, however, to illustrate the wide interests and vigorous imaginations of the children. The graded school boys and girls, eight to eleven years old, were studying the life of Marshal Feng, the Chinese Christian general. When news came about the long night shifts worked by children in the cotton mills of Shanghai, they immediately wrote little letters to people of influence telling them the facts, confidently expecting them to intervene. Mr. Stanley Baldwin was given the information as well as Marshal Feng. Later on, during the troublous times in China, when British troops were sent out and incidents were numerous, a big Hands-off-China demonstration was planned. Processions from North, South, East, and West London were to meet in Trafalgar Square. Rosie Bishop, aged fifteen, a stalwart member of Children's House, the eldest of a family of seven, had developed heart trouble, which grew quickly more acute. She wasn't allowed to ride in a bus or on the underground. She had been at home for weeks. She gave in her name as one who would walk in the procession. I told her she couldn't. After we'd marched a few yards, she slipped into the ranks. I chided her. She smiled and kept up with our rapid pace. After half a mile I begged her to go back, for Rosie was really a very precious person, not easily to be spared from the world. She laughed quietly, her face pallid. Later on I spoke again, assuring her she'd done her part, showed her colours, made her stand. She could honourably return now. She drew herself up with a little proud gesture and remarked: "I'm not going home. This is the least anybody can do for China."

The cold was intense. Not very long after, Rosie had died.

There are thousands of girls and boys such as she, dying unneces-

sarily in their 'teens. There are ten times that number physically vigorous but psychologically unstable, spiritually undeveloped as a result of being uprooted from their home and school life and thrown into industry to become a cog in a machine at the age of fourteen.

The golf links lie so near the mill
  That almost every day
The children from their windows look
  And see the men at play.

We have some hard campaigns ahead of us if this quatrain is to be obsolete.

The Children's House program consists of a graded school, play hours, classes, a health club, a parent's association, camps, Camp Fire Girls and holidays. The nursery school is the most attractive section. An incident occurred in it which seems to adumbrate a new religious philosophy. An old lady with a grudge had been writing unpleasant letters about the school and sending them under a false name to the local education authority. They promptly forwarded them to us. Our superintendent guessed who the writer was and sending for her asked her to give up the libellous habit. At first the woman vowed innocence, but when the letters were produced she broke down, dropped her head on the young superintendent's shoulder, wept many salt tears down her collar and remarked:

"Oh, Miss! I'm as good a woman as God ever made . . . only I can't live up to it."

CHAPTER XII

On Trying to Be a Parson

I WISH people would stop asking me, after church, how I liked the sermon, because I hardly ever do. In the other part of the service lies the thing that mankind craves, contact with reality.

Thomas à Kempis said that when he had been abroad among men he returned to his cell feeling less than a man. That sounds a pity, but we glimpse what he meant. It is difficult to keep in harmony with the Eternal when one is having continually to adjust and readjust oneself to the many people one meets in a morning. In worship linked by silence to the great Creative Spirit who upholds all creatures in life, one's personal preoccupations drop away from one. Funny little attitudes of pride and resentment disappear. One is no longer concerned about this and that. One is for the time being more than a man, part of the Eternal Spirit, strong, unafraid, sincere, serene. Then up goes a very limited mortal and talks and talks and talks.

Poor parsons! It's a shame that they are forced into so much sermonizing. Can their long speeches attract people to God? I often try to put myself in the place of one of a hallful of college girls, waiting to hear me talk. I imagine their thoughts. "Hm, yes, that's true. Oh, she thinks so and so, does she? Well, it sounds convincing. But I mustn't let myself get convinced. If I did, I might become like her. What a terrible thought!"

In my youth I was so bored with the weekly sermons that I always listened to them from other people's points of view. There in front of me sat a telegraph boy, a young housemaid, or an engine-driver. What was it meaning to them? This anecdote, does it fit in at all with the man's experience of life? This analogy might mean a lot to the girl. Or this challenge, will the boy have courage to respond? My imaginative exercises prevented me from acquiring the weekly grumble at the sermon that my friends indulged in on the way home to Sunday dinner.

It is not good enough, however, to listen to sermons vicariously. I tried another method. I would absorb poetry out of the hymn-book. In some books quite a lot of the hymns are poetry. Or I would take a French, a Greek, an Esperanto Testament to church and try to read it. I found a good thing to ponder during the sermon time was the pattern life would assume if we did Christ the honour of thinking He meant what He said. If we who shared the same hymn-book and the same form of prayer shared also the same housing shortage, the same holidays, the same need of nourishment, the same social conditions; if we were to work out voluntarily a redistribution of resources that would no longer thwart God, who "gave His good gifts for all men richly to enjoy"—no longer would His slum child go seeking his bunch of violets in an ashcan. No longer would the negro's yearning for colour drive him out of his doleful wooden back-to-back shack into thieving. The church might become a fellowship again.

I found van Dyke's story of *The Other Wise Man* expressed this idea so perfectly that I learned by heart an abridged version and recited it when asked "to say a few words" at a village church tea meeting. The people were gripped by the colour and movement of the dramatic tale. But the minister seemed afraid of the consequences of the story and proceeded to lead the people out of their sense of serene satisfaction into the realm of the old theoretic pronouncement concerning God's plan of salvation. He seemed to know all about it. He explained that God could not give free play to His love because He was held in bondage by man's sense of justice. Blood has to be shed and a complicated legal transaction performed before this little company sitting together could enjoy unconvenanted mercy. Then we were asked to sing a hymn about a fountain.

Kingsley had been asked to leave a village church where he was ministering. The very fact that he preached and served a Christ whom people found it easy to love made his teaching dangerous. They explained this to him carefully, regretfully, and with deep personal affection. Yet the lives of these fervent souls were fair and sweet, regulated by acts of service, shot through with humour, sustained by faith. They were far more lovable than their God.

Meanwhile the "middle-of-the-path" Christians, tolerant and open-

minded, were hiding the eternal charity of God behind another ugly mask. Sweet reasonableness may easily betray one into sentimentality. They tried to keep loyal to both the teaching of Christ and the requirements of the state. And from the struggle there evolved the idea that one may stick a bayonet into a man's body and love him, both at the same time.

After I had been leading the Sunday-evening worship at Kingsley Hall for some years, I gradually realized I was turning into a parson. I had not intended this to happen. I was ill-trained and unsuitable. But it seemed to happen as so many things happened in Bow, by the force of circumstances. At first our Sunday-night meetings were held at a quarter past eight, very obviously after the church and chapel services of the vicinity. We considered ours as strictly complementary to theirs. We had the best music we could get, silent prayer, and a hymn-book new to nearly all of us, the Fellowship Hymn-book, wherein poems of profound worship prepared us for the factual program of Christ's teaching. It contained music and verse from all ages and many countries.

I am rather pernickety about hymn-singing. I have often seen people encouraged to make false declarations and to forswear themselves and promise impossibilities by dint of providing them with a snappy tune and exhorting them to sing louder. Isn't it approaching blasphemy to let a large congregation sing "the first two and last verses" of a hymn whose climax was reaching in the third verse? Its elimination renders the last verse worse than meaningless, a mockery.

The four verses of "When I survey the wondrous cross" must have meant something tremendous to its author. How dare we cut it about and wax sentimental about it? Who dared to change the lovely original second line, "Where the young prince of glory died"? By dint of playing the piano myself, I managed to get a few suggestions across about keeping silent rather than sing a line one didn't mean; about never trying to sing louder than was natural; about the egotism of saying one couldn't sing when everyone who possesses the usual complement of lips, tongue, throat, etc. can; about the importance of never looking round, thus obtruding oneself on the attention of others who are probably trying to gain consciousness of God; about the bad habit

of shutting one's hymn-book and starting to put it away during the singing of the last verse, which usually constitutes the climax and requires more concentration than the rest.

The addresses were given by different people each week. When the benediction was over, we behaved like a large family reunited on a holiday at home. We ate buns, drank tea and coffee, argued, discussed, and contradicted the speaker. It was always a hard job to get the people to leave at ten o'clock.

It was difficult building up something without any traditions to guide one, a fellowship based on the attempt to practise the presence of God, based on the unwary human spirit, so easily deceived. We had to go on, however, deepening our furrow,

> Our eyes for ever on some sign
> To help us plough the perfect line.

It had to be worked out somehow in bricks and mortar, in flesh and blood, in worship and devotion. But how abysmally poor was the quality of the leader's own character! John Masefield's *Everlasting Mercy* provided many a phrase to fit Kingsley Hall. Part of Saul Kane's naïve remark is my own. Running Kingsley Hall

> ". . . Made me see
> The harm I done by being me."

In 1924 a deputation of helpers forced upon me the need of considering our relationship to the church. Was I not deceiving myself in continuing to imagine that Kingsley Hall was only complementing the work of the local ministers? Was it not true that most of our people never dreamed of going to church, had not attended since they were children? Were we not all slipping along the line of least resistance so far as organization was concerned? Should we not have a regular church membership? a monthly meeting of members to take responsibility? a yearly mission in which people should face the responsibility of each human being for getting the will of God done on earth?

How vividly I remember sitting with the deputation in sheer agony! I did not want this priestly responsibility. Moreover, I knew I was no

organizer. But I felt they were all wiser than I, had thought more about the matter than I. I had just gone on week by week according to my wont, enjoying "things as they are." My sister Doris favoured the idea. It has always been her *métier* to jolt me out of my ruts.

Of course we already had performed some of the functions of a church. When one of our devoted Kingsley Hall members died; it was unthinkable to her family and to us that the funeral service should be in an ugly, draughty cemetery chapel.

The stricken look of an East Ender when death has been a visitor in his home constitutes an imperative demand for help. Quiet comradeship, music, silent prayer, words of eternal significance, all are needed by the mourners, whether they are Christian or atheist, brave or craven. They are in a mood abnormally receptive.

A sense of expectancy broods over the company gathered together, waiting for the service. The hard crust that is ordinarily round about the impressionable parts of men's minds has broken up. Something surely is going to happen that will help one bear this grief. As I sit in a dark little unheated cemetery chapel wherein three coffins stand, each flanked by its own pewfuls of mourners, I too look forward to some word of power which shall bring all of us in touch with reality and satisfy our human craving with the presence of the Eternal. Then in comes a stranger, an aloof officiator, who is performing this ceremony most of his time. He looks neither to right nor left. The children present see his downcast face. He turns many pages in various books before he starts to read, quickly, many long passages from Saint Paul's writings. Then a number of prayers are repeated. Presently the stranger goes out and the coffins go out and the people go out and the destined moment has gone irrevocably.

So, for our dear neighbour Kingsley Hall members made the place beautiful with flowers and music. The sense of gratitude for her life was stressed. We used the prayer that had helped us all at Kingsley's death. Even the undertaker was impressed. Then when tragedy occurred down our street and for three days a little girl was missing and eventually found drowned, when consequent morbidity had the neighbourhood in its grip, the funeral was held at Kingsley Hall. Her small friends were prepared by stories and music and talks to take

their due part in a service planned to win comfort and confidence and triumph over death for the distraught mother and for all present.

As Kingsley Hall had inherited from its previous owners a licence for public worship, there was nothing to prevent my performing marriages. This I had done several times. But a membership! The equivalent of confirmation! The communion! The regular cure of souls! An annual mission! The very idea was a burden.

As I pondered for weeks on the situation, I saw how little of all that had occurred at Kingsley Hall had been originally intended. It was to have been a teetotal public house, a straightforward affair which almost any friendly person could set up and run. And from even that I had tried to excuse myself. Now it comprised eleven whole-time workers, two buildings, a lecture series, men's and women's clubs, a football club, a penny bank, an adult school, a Sunday service, and a nursery school drawing a government grant and regularly inspected officially and unofficially by people from all over the world.

God had had other purposes than mine. I remembered how prayers had been instituted at closing time every night after club, how somehow or other we had set up the habit of standing in a big circle and keeping quiet, of having a sentence spoken to bring to a head our scattered and varied desires. And I remembered how atheists would attend this prayer and on occasion would voice our aspirations for us. Certainly there must be a definite spiritual unity if a group of us could meet as Brethren of the Common Table once a month and wrestle with the anomalies of our economic situation, in study, prayer, and redistribution.

I came to the conclusion that we already were a church. The deputation was right. It was romantic and egotistic not to face the fact that I had performed the duties of a parson for some time and had better bestir myself to fix up the gaps in my ministry. The communion service was instituted; a church roll formed, church meetings started, a church secretary and treasurer elected, a weekly prayer group set up, a week's mission held.

During the first mission, five or six came to the conclusion that they could no longer be interested spectators enjoying the game. They must throw in their lot with the little company of the followers of Christ,

take up their position in the long and often straggling procession of the faithful that has stretched across the centuries, and assume their share of responsibility for the witness of the universal Church in every country. In the most remote areas of the earth's surface are to be found groups who are trying to substitute the will of God for their own, as Christ teaches us to do, individuals who have learnt to think eternally and to live courageously. The old declaration, *Je suis Chrétien, c'est ma gloire,* implies much. It is no partisan boast. There had to be some opportunity for its public expression in Kingsley Hall. We decided to mark it by holding a service for the "giving of the right hand of fellowship." The candidates for membership stood up facing me and four experienced older members, while each of us in turn made short statements as to what it meant to follow Christ. One spoke of the necessity to develop the health of the body by clean living, self-control, love of nature, and conquest of disease; another of the need to work for economic and social justice; another stressed the refusal to kill, because one can't overcome evil with evil. The way of the Cross is the way of forgiveness and creative peace. A fourth demanded personal service, as specific, as definite and as menial as that of Christ washing the feet of a traitor. Finally I explained that these high aims and requirements were all far beyond our reach unless we practised the presence of God by regular and constant prayer.

Then each candidate came forward and gripped our hands. After a rousing song of triumph, the whole congregation resumed their seats. It was extraordinarily difficult to be the first person to go through this rather exhilarating ceremony. "Can't I just come in quietly without standing up in front of everyone?" The question was put to me over and over again in different words. I am glad I remained adamant. So were the candidates afterwards. The harder a thing is, the greater the sense of strength and satisfaction that follows.

For some of the priestly functions I had to work out a new technique. For instance, Joan Waterlow wanted to be married in a pine wood in Sussex in spring. The merely legal part was performed first by a registrar in a stuffy office in the nearest town. Then she and George Lambourne came walking through the forest glade to where I stood by the altar, which was a young larch. A char-à-banc full of

Bow friends formed most of the congregation. With song and praise and prayer they invoked God's blessing on the couple. All the birds of the air seemed to join in the ceremony.

After a few years, the members were ready to go further and to provide from among themselves eight elders to take over responsibilities. Dr. Herbert Gray came over to institute this order. Soon a large yearly income that had been promised us was withheld because we had instituted sacraments and had therefore become schismatics. An unknown lady made it her business to come to Bow several times a week for a month or so. She called on as many houses as she could get round to, made friends with the women, and then proceeded to warn them about me. She told them I went in for free love, did not believe in God, and was writing a new Bible.

The old phrases "conviction of sin," "salvation," the "Cross," and "the grace of Jesus Christ," heretofore merely theological terms to me, assumed new meaning as I became intimately involved in people's troubles and joys and growing awareness of spirit.

We often had to take action in matters we would rather have left alone. For instance, how could we sit still without a murmur, complacently allowing God's gift of fresh air and blue sky, the unspoiled inheritance of the human race for a quarter of a million years, to become subject to the base usage of the Royal Air Force. Were we not in the direct line of succession from Telemachus the hermit? He learned in solitary prayer not only God's way of looking at things, but how to act in a hostile crowd. He walked into the Coliseum, took his seat quietly, and at the height of the gladiatorial games called upon the crowd to stop the murderous circus. Was it not an insult to God and man? He was killed. But so were the games. The lines about the crucified apply to him too.

And so the lonely greatness of the world
  In silence dies.
And death is shattered by the light from out
  Those darkened eyes.

We were working to save the world from militarism through our own political parties, by our parliamentary votes, by lobbying, deputa-

tions, public meetings. But there was our personal witness. June was approaching when the Royal Air Force always gave a magnificent display at Hendon. After much preparation, a group of some twenty Christians set out, men and women, ex-soldier and ex-teacher, factory girl, and unemployed. Twenty isn't many among two hundred thousand spectators. But holding up our carefully-worded placards we marched up and down the narrow thronged street which leads from the station to the Airdrome. Then we went into the Airdrome. In varied ways we gave our witness. One working-woman called out: "Ain't you ashamed of yerselves, coming 'ere to watch this show? It's only practice for killing other people's children."

"Wot are you here for, then, if you think it's so wicked?"

"I'm 'ere because my church sent me. I'm trying to make all of yous wake up and think."

After the display the road was solid with people making for the station. Here progress was that of the proverbial snail. Although trains were continually being filled and dispatched Londonwards, our speakers had a grand time, perched on a chair behind the wooden fence, appealing to an audience that could not escape. Once a drunken man in the crowd ridiculed one of them, aping his queer hoarse voice. The young interrupter was still within earshot when the speech ended. He suddenly sobered and wilted when I started my address by explaining that the hoarse voice just referred to was the result of the speaker, an unemployed workman, having been gassed in the war.

The business of the Church of Christ touches life at every point, and it is perhaps better not to join it than to come in imagining that one can have a day off whenever one likes. Peter used the right word when he described a Christian as the "slave" of Christ. His dictatorship passes all others. Yet it is never imposed from without.

CHAPTER XIII

Day by Day in Bow

CHILDREN'S House was fortunate in its first two full-time men helpers, Ben Platten and Godfrey Pain. Holiday schools and summer camps for the children had been held for many years, but these two started our Kingsley Hall camp for grown-ups. We set up a modest little row of tents in a remote Surrey village by a cheerful sparkling stream where watercress was cultivated and sweet-scented yellow musk covered the banks. The camp opened a fresh era for some of us. It was "a brave new world," this green and fragrant earth, this winding little river, this expanse of wooded hillside stitched with meandering footpaths, these hedges, foxgloves and other gracious, friendly growing things, this complete absence of bricks and mortar. It took time for some of the campers to get over the astonishment at finding that such a world had been in existence all their lives without their knowing it.

The transformation in us all was automatic. A well-groomed, starch-collared elevator attendant became in a thrice the perfect wood-gatherer, setting out with a coil of rope, perching on out-reaching oak branches, hacking off dead wood, dragging back fuel of the best. The high-heeled painted young waitress stared, only for a moment intimidated, at the musk-scented women's bathroom, which was an up-river winding reach of the stream, overhung by foliage, secluded enough to bathe and wash and swim *au naturel.*

Camp meals are banquets indeed. No sauce equals appetite. Green grass is our napery. Sun-browned fingers are better than silver forks. Full-throated bird choirs waken us and accompany our meals. Our ceiling is fairer than any baronial hall could provide, of ever-changing blue and white design. We keep silence before each meal. "It is a comely fashion to be glad. Joy is the grace we say to God." Only at such moments could we hear the distant music of the swift-flowing stream.

After breakfast and supper we used to sing. Our books provided just the right songs and praises and prayers and responsive readings for a June camp. At Kingsley Hall, on the Sunday night after our return, we relayed to all who had had to stay at home the fun of living together as a community with a regular program, each working at dish-washing, sanitation, cooking, and worship. One of the men, a highly intelligent agnostic, ended his report thus: "And the sarlences! In those sarlences you were perfectly certain almost that there was a God."

We have had many other camping-sites since then, by the sea, on the Sussex downs, and at Knebworth. Here our steadfast friend, Lord Lytton, takes us on long walks, shows us with his periscope the nest eggs high up in the trees, rows us about on the lake, catches trout for us, joins us at supper and talks to us by the hour about his experiences in China and Japan. Yet that first Surrey camp has never been improved upon.

One picture stays in my mind. Our camp fire was near a wooden fence on which hung our frying-pans, dixies, dishcloths, and tea towels. Hidden by the tall grass behind the fence ran a railway track, not much used. Engines passed so slowly that we made friends with one driver. He watched us wrestling at times with inadequate kindling and made a habit of tossing us excellent lumps of coal as he passed. Swabs also came floating down to us on the balmy air. On the last morning one of the campers, Alec, was invited to go rabbit-shooting with a cottager. All the men envied him. He returned late for dinner, looking green. He was trying to forget what was dangling from an unwilling right hand. "Did you shoot it?" shouted an admiring crowd. He looked sicker than ever and refused the proffered plate of dinner. "No," he answered. "The man did. He gave it to me. I don't think it's quite dead."

A less squeamish camper examined it and set at rest the concern of the company who insisted, however, that the corpse should be decently covered. Sheets of newspaper hid it from view. Soon the engine-driver heralded the arrival of his train by letting the safety valve screech a greeting. The back of the sportsman, who was sitting some distance from us all, suddenly lost its listless look. He leapt up, signalled to

the man to slow down, seized with averted head the sheets of newspaper and what lay between, clambered over the fence, and hurled his burden high into the air just as the engine cab was passing. The throw was well timed. The loose paper floated into space. The dead rabbit fell on top of the coals. The driver's face depicted as much joy as Alec's.

"Too old at forty" was a slogan coined before the war to jerk the easily satisfied general public into awareness of unemployment. I had good grounds for changing the cry into "Two old at seventeen," when I found that numbers of boys and girls who entered industry at fourteen, proud to be able to contribute to the family exchequer, were summarily dismissed two years later when they reached the age of compulsory insurance. They remained idle.

Living in the same street with unemployed youths inevitably meant facing their problems. What *is* the answer to this argument of a specially thoughtful boy of twenty? "By rights I ought to do myself in. Of course I don't say so at home. It wouldn't 'arf upset my mother. But it's months since I 'ad a job and though I get the dole, I know I'm eating more than I pay for. That means my young brothers and sisters are going short, not 'aving as good a chance as I 'ad when I was their age. I ought to get art of it, but there, I'm a coward and I don't."

Another neighbour who got a job only after prolonged idleness met me one night and proudly offered the information that he'd gained fourteen pounds in weight during the four weeks he had worked. After congratulating him I ignorantly added, "That was the better food, I suppose." It was with a witheringly scornful glance that he retorted, "Food? It was having a contented mind, of course."

We started a toy-making industry at Kingsley Hall. Our men worked every day at a design kindly prepared for us by a craftsman friend, and turned out hundreds of neat little boxes containing fishes, seaweed, pebbles, hook and line. But marketing was a great difficulty and we couldn't afford to carry on long.

I found myself comparing the youths down my street with my nephews at Oxford. Wherein lay their chief disadvantage? Height, girth, and brawn were inferior in Bow, but that didn't matter so much. I came to the conclusion that the lack of a regular program was the

chief of their evils. In college there is always the next thing to consider, the thing that must be done. There is the wholesome change from work to play, from play to work. The clock regulates one's life. In unemployment the clock doesn't count; one need not even get up in the morning. It is a paralyzing experience to lie in bed and seek an answer to the rational query, "What are the grounds for my belief that I ought to get up?"

I decided to try the experiment of running a summer school in Children's House during the holidays. Any one could come. We would live together, do our own housework, regulate our days by a bell. The students should work every morning, go on excursions in the afternoon, sum up their findings, debate, or write their theses in the evening. It proved strangely satisfying, this exactitude of time, this intimacy with books, this opportunity to compose and create. Two of them climbed up to the parapet and hoisted chairs thither to write verse. Our course lasted two weeks and was designed to give them some understanding of the elements of language, poetry, music, architecture, and philosophy. At dusk each night classical music started. They did not willingly let it cease. Afterwards quietness fell and changed to prayer. One of them would read from Mark's Gospel. Then we would go to bed. I do not think I imagined the look of healthy eagerness and of vitality that marked them at the end of the school.

Though camps, summer schools, and conferences developed, the married women of the neighbourhood always seemed to stay at home. One middle-aged mother had not spent a night out of her bed for twenty-six years. Some one gave me a hundred pounds to spend, and I told the Women's Meeting that we'd have a week's holiday. They laughed the idea to scorn. What about the babies? I reminded them that they were not always in the same state of maternity. Children sometimes could be left. We would utilize the unfortunate unemployment of their husbands to some purpose. They laughed the more. I said: "Anyhow, give that message to your husbands with their tea this evening and tell them there is going to be a week's holiday for women at Torquay next June. I am going to it, anyhow, and I don't believe I shall be the only member. We will start taking payments

next week. It will cost you a pound. The balance is provided by a friend."

Twenty-eight of us enjoyed Devonshire. During ten successive years we have had our week in Northumberland, Wales, Guernsey, Norfolk, and Sussex. We stay in a private hotel or boarding-house so that there is no housework to do. One seventy-year-old member tramped over a Welsh mountain in pouring rain without a grumble even when I lost the way and the farm where we were to have tea never materialized.

The first holiday was in 1926, the year made memorable by the general strike. For ten days we were cut off from anywhere further than walking distance. We were wholeheartedly with the miners whose conditions of work had been growing steadily worse since the peacemakers of Versailles had made a free present to France of a steady stream of trainloads of German coal. Our people behaved splendidly. George Lansbury kept reminding us to fold our arms and do nothing, to respond to no provocation, to keep quiet and amuse ourselves as we well knew how with concerts, singing, and entertainments, but above all to keep our arms folded. There was enough provocation indeed. In Victoria Park the soldiers were encamped, ready in case martial law should be proclaimed. That this would have suited the mood of certain of our political leaders we all knew well.

On the second or third morning a workman of some influence called to tell me that the local brewers had opened their gates and were distributing free beer to anyone who cared to come and drink it. Exactly the sort of action calculated to lead to trouble. We decided to go at once to the brewery and appeal to the manager to change his tactics. At that moment the telephone rang. Doris answered and came to consult me. It was Lady Astor from Westminster enquiring if there was anything she could do for us. I told her about the brewery. She proved a singularly efficient ram in the thicket. She ranged the corridors of the House of Commons telling everyone within sound of her voice what was going on in Bow. We had no repetition of that trouble.

I was proud of the sense of solidarity in the neighbourhood. Many had never seen a mine or a miner, but they were adamant in support of them. They watched their savings go, tightening their belts, mak-

ing the best of it as usual. On the tenth day we were called together to listen to the terms of settlement over the radio. We went with high hopes for the future. We thought we had saved the miners from their wretched situation! The Cabinet Minister's suave voice announcing our defeat in kindliest terms caused an embitterment of spirit that years have not been able to heal.

Forced to abandon the colliers and return to work with union coffers depleted, we felt it a point of honour to contribute material aid to those brave men and their families. Thousands of tiny miners' lamps were manufactured in metal and sold at a shilling each to sympathizers all over the country. Every Sunday morning I took a pocketful of them to sell in Victoria Park, and after an open-air meeting asked the audience for a shower of coppers. One day I took ten pounds, mostly in coppers, from the audience. To keep the public from settling down into complacency we turned ourselves again into a living newspaper, parading the streets of London holding placards, displaying the latest facts of suffering and want in the coal-fields.

Variously to divide mankind into two parts according to temperament, character, caste, or creed has been a favourite pastime with amateur philosophers. I wonder if there exists a more positive line of demarcation than that dividing the man who has and the man who has not an extra half-crown that he can lay his hand on at any moment. The person who is always in sight of his last shilling develops a different outlook on life. The missing of a train may spell disaster. He cannot take the next. He only holds a workman's ticket. Or suppose he meets a person in distress. He is a good Samaritan by nature but he stifles his impulse to help. It is bad form to make a fuss at the loss of a coin, but he must, because there isn't another to take its place. A feeling of inferiority grips him at last. There are so many inhibitions for a man without an extra shilling.

Apart from special occasions there is a constant long-drawn-out anxiety as to what will occur when his coat won't hold together any longer. One of the bravest things I remember took place at a public meeting when a boy of seventeen, already burdened with stage fright, gave his club's report in the momentary expectation of splitting his

trousers. But for his admiring mother I should not have known why he made so many excuses when he was chosen for this bit of service.

A carpenter consistently refused to do his share of speaking. As he was an able and popular person, I asked him eventually what right he had to hold back from giving service. It was his upper dentures that were unreliable, not himself. They habitually descended. He could only camouflage the fact by affecting a silent manner.

Herein is the bitterness of poverty. Material shortage creates a feeling of inferiority not directly, but by devious routes, shaking confidence in oneself, leading inevitably to a loss of confidence in others, in God and, at last, in life itself.

CHAPTER XIV

India

ONE Sunday night early in 1926, Gladys Owen brought her friend, Professor Gangulee, the son-in-law of Rabindranath Tagore, to speak at Kingsley Hall. My return visit fell on the afternoon of his talk with Lord Irwin, the prospective Viceroy. His record of the conversation gave one a little further insight into what great things India and Britain might do for each other if once the inhibitions caused by power and resentment could be removed. Absolute control over millions of human beings seems to do as much harm to the dominating as to the subject race. The two men, Indian and Briton, Hindu and Christian, ruler and ruled, were sincerely considering together the poverty of the Indian peasant. Professor Gangulee said to the Viceroy, "Of course we want you to reënact the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. But we want more from you than that. You British are giving us your brains, your organizing capacity, your culture. That's not enough. You are not giving us yourselves."

In silence they faced the question of the differences between the two peoples, the constant clash of colour, outlook, religion, business interests, and political aims. What had they in common? "Only the spirit," they agreed.

Mr. Gangulee and I were walking down Holborn to the tube station when in a meditative voice he remarked: "I wish you would go to India and see things for yourself. If you could spare time to stay a month with the poet, a month with Mr. Gandhi, and a month looking round, I would arrange everything for you."

I held my breath. Was this a daydream? In his quiet voice he continued explaining the usefulness of such a visit. Reassured, I hastened to close with the offer in case it issued from a mood of elation that might pass. "When shall I start?" I inquired. The time was fixed. We went underground, I to Bow, he to make final arrangements for his return to India.

My eighteen-year-old nephew accompanied me. His subsequent years at Oxford would probably mean more to him for having learnt the Oriental point of view.

On arrival the first thing I noticed was the servility, the cowering obsequious attitude of the Indians on the quay. Fear was writ large on so many faces, not just physical fear, but a deep-seated worry, apparently caused by never quite understanding what these big Englishmen wanted done next. Indians train themselves to watch their master's eyes and try to interpret his wishes, often by guesswork. It's depressing to watch one's fellow countrymen become progressively more irritable and louder voiced. I've seen nothing like it except in Mississippi and other regions of the Southern States.

As Dan'l and I ate supper together that first night in a Bombay restaurant, I voiced my disgust at the domineering attitude of the white man. He replied, "I bet you and I would grow just as lordly if we stayed here more than a year." Afterwards we found that that is the period the India intelligentsia allots the newcomer from Britain. "Most of you keep normal and human and friendly for about twelve months," I was informed, "then you line up with the rest of your community."

On the following night we set out for Ahmedabad, arriving at 8 A.M. We drove the four miles to Sabarmati and found the roads thronged with people dressed in gleaming white hand-woven clothes. We had arrived at the Ashram in the midst of the twelve-hour celebration of Mr. Gandhi's fifty-sixth birthday. We were allotted a wooden shed containing a bed, a table, a chair, and a water-pot. A second bed stood on the porch. The bath sheds were in another part of the garden. They contained only pails of water and a hole in one corner of the floor through which the water could drain away. In the courtyard, where scores of spinning-wheels made the air hum, we were introduced to Mr. Gandhi. We found him the sort of person who sets one immediately at ease, friendly, unhindered by consideration of prestige or etiquette, humour-loving, serene, positive. When he returned to the spinning contest, we were conducted to where the school children were producing a play. The women sitting by me on the sand tried to weaken my determination at once to learn Indian ways. They begged me to let them find me a chair. But ankles, knees and hips, though

painfully contorted, eventually become accustomed to the squatting position.

The heat grew intense. So did my hunger, for we had refused breakfast on the train, forgetting that Indian meal-times would be different from our own. The play seemed interminable; I retired to my room, thereby missing the last part of the program, a scene from "By an Unknown Disciple." At half past five people began to spread narrow strips of matting on the floor. Seated on these, we were given plates made of dried banana leaves fastened together by thorns. Some one sang a blessing. Ashram women passed up and down the row of guests, some five hundred of us, continually replenishing our supply of raisins, nuts, and grapes from baskets carried on their hips.

My neighbours on the matting pointed out figures of nation-wide reputation; told me to use only my right hand for eating; explained that "ji" added to the end of a name was the equivalent of our Mr. Then the day guests went, and the Ashram dwellers, about two hundred of them, gathered together on the sandy praying ground by the river. Some one played the *sitthar*; another sang the prayers; the darkness fell; the stars came out.

As Gandhiji's twenty-four hours of silence started that night, one of his helpers came with a message asking me to prolong my visit for two days so that we could have further talk. "Two days!" I exclaimed, with a forced laugh, "I've come for a month. I hope you don't mind, but I have." Luckily the messenger had a sense of humour. Professor Gangulee's letter to Gandhiji had gone astray.

At four o'clock next morning prayers started again. A little silver thread of crescent moon emerged from the horizon just behind Gandhiji and the group of children who always surrounded him at prayers. It climbed the sky so that the lamps we'd carried to light us along from our huts did not need to be relit for our return. Dan'l and I soon fitted into the Ashram pattern, cleaning, water-carrying, laundering, dish-washing, and learning to spin. Every evening came the six-o'clock sunset walk and every morning a swim in the River Sabarmati that bounds the garden on the south.

I had never swum before in a river, and this was turbulent with flood. Surprising to find one need make no effort, merely let the swift-flowing

water carry one down to the prescribed landing-place marked by a narrow flight of stone steps! Wanting to accustom myself to this means of locomotion, I left the rest of the party to dry and dress and walked back to the starting-place to do it again. Logs of wood, branches and other flotsam and jetsam rushed past as I stood on the brink. There seemed to be a fiery patch in the middle of one of the floating logs. As it approached, I saw it was a bull; his eye was panic stricken. I waited till the waters were momentarily free from floating masses before giving myself to the current. The river bent; the landing-place hove in sight; on its lowest step a large sized snake was gracefully poised, ready to dive into the river, obviously awaiting my arrival. There was only a second to decide whether to strike out to the right and get tangled up with its coils or go on swimming down the Sabarmati, rushing past its bank devoid of further landing-places, perhaps even to the far-off sea. Something apart from myself decided the question. I made for the dreaded steps. The snake at the same instant dived. My heart went cold, but my limbs, thanks to adrenalin, continued to function. I clambered out of the river uninvolved in the serpent's slimy folds.

Dan'l did not take kindly to the half-hour's spinning each day which is *de rigueur* at the Ashram. I didn't, either, but forced myself to conform, though I seemed to produce something more like string than yarn. I have always hated laundering work and here it necessitated an extraordinary posture. I felt thoroughly silly standing on a stone step with my feet in twelve inches of river, bending like a hairpin so as to rinse and rub and soap the garments adequately, taking precautions lest any of the implements were carried off by the stream, balancing my hideous, stiff, and super-British sun helmet on my head while sweat poured off my inverted face. This had to be done every other day. My shins were sore and red with the bites of fishes who seemed to like my flavour. Fortunately Dan'l soon compounded with me to do the laundry for both of us if I would do his share of the house-cleaning. Another job of his was to help Gandhiji clean out the communal latrines.

Seated one day on the verandah of Mrs. Gandhi's house, eating the excellent meal she regularly prepared for all visitors, I heard scraps of conversation issuing from Gandhiji's room. A young American was

having a long talk with him and towards the close of it asked him what he thought of the troubled situation in China, whither a few regiments of British soldiers had been dispatched to assure the safety of our nationals, traders, teachers, missionaries, and others. The clear tone and precise words of Gandhiji's answer have stayed in my mind ever since. "If you Christians rely on soldiers for your safety, you are denying your own doctrine of the Cross," he said. Then he brought out his visitor to eat with us, introduced him as Mr. Stanley High and asked me to entertain him for the afternoon. I remember what a very fat loose-leaf notebook Mr. High brought with him.

Once a week, Gandhiji lectured at the near-by nationalist college. His subject was the New Testament. I always attended, though he spoke in Gujerati. It didn't matter not understanding the words. I watched the hallful of students in white homespun sitting on the floor, row upon row. Each was provided with a Bible bound in shiny black. On the walls were hung prints of Italian pictures illustrating the Gospel. In a brazier a stick of incense burned. On a divan sat the college musician, playing the *vina*, while visitors arrived from Ahmedabad, merchants, friends, and social workers. Then Gandhiji took his place on the divan, gave out the text, Matthew 5:8, and talked on non-violence for the rest of the hour.

Two residents of Ahmedabad became my special friends, Anasuya Sarabbai and Shankarlal Banker. We liked hearing about each other's similar experiences. Anasuya had broken away from the conventions of a rich mill-owner's home and organized the workmen of the city into a labour union. For years this had been increasing in influence. Now it ran twenty-two schools in the city, several of them for Untouchables,[1] who were accepted gladly even on the governing committee of the union. Anasuya had led a strike for a thirty-three-and-a-half-per-cent increase in wages, for the lowering of the working-hours from twelve to ten and the raising of child-labour age from ten to twelve. After ten weeks' struggle they attained their objective, but only when Gandhiji took a vow to eat nothing until their just demands were granted.

Shankarlal Banker as a young man had been brought up in Western style, frankly scornful of Gandhiji and what he considered his eccen-

[1] For description of Untouchables see Chapter XXI, Page 1.

tricity. On the occasion when he had to go to him to get support for internae, he refused to sit on the floor to talk with him. He waited for a chair to be brought him. After he had gone home, he could not rid his mind of the contrast between himself and the Mahatma, proud fatuity and humble service, assumed and inherent dignity, his own self-respect demanding artificial aid and Gandhiji's complete forgetfulness of self. It was not many weeks before he discarded his leather shoes and Western clothes, put on Indian *dhoti* and sandals, apprenticed himself to the Ashram discipline of ginning, carding, spinning, and weaving, and gave himself and his whole life to build up the All India Spinning Association.

We spent three hours together comparing notes.

"Why don't you talk to Gandhiji like this?" they repeatedly inquired. "He would be tremendously interested."

"I'd like to," I would answer. "But it doesn't come naturally to talk of such things when he is always surrounded by so many admirers hanging on his every word. How could I start? Can you imagine any one saying, 'Gandhiji, I want to tell you lots of little things that have happened to me in East London. You must listen.'"

"But the stories you tell us about your non-violence movement in war-time! And the spiritual giants of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in various countries of Europe and America! He would love to hear of them," they persisted.

"Of course he would," I answered. "But you can't push a story on to any one. We three evoke them from each other."

The weeks passed and nothing but polite and pleasant greetings as to the good morning or the fine evening passed between the great man and me, though a fellow Ashram-dweller said that he asked one day, "Who is this Englishwoman who sits reading in her room and doesn't come and talk to me?"

Presently my two friends grew restive. "Will you come with us and talk to him?" they inquired.

"I'd love to," I replied, "if you'll start the talk."

It was a night or two before my month's visit ended that the moment came. I was shown into Gandhiji's room, bare of furniture. He asked me to sit by the wheel at which he was spinning, his eyes always intent

on the yarn. My two friends were ensconced and silent in a corner. It seemed that nothing was going to happen. I felt it was a case of "now or never." I suddenly blurted out: "Mr. Gandhi, will you please come to England? I think it's very important that you should."

Rhythmically turning the handle and drawing out a fine, strong thread, he proceeded to spin out in a monotone the fitting rhythmic reply: "What would be the good? We have not yet attained enough success by our non-violence methods to justify my coming to England and teaching your good Fellowship of Reconciliation people anything."

Here was my clue. Dared I interrupt? I'd got to.

"But Gandhiji, I don't want you to come to England in order to teach us. I want you to come and learn from us."

It is an achievement to surprise Gandhiji, and I'd done it. I'd got past his guard. Better still, I'd made him laugh, long and heartily, too. We had become friends.

I returned to the subject, "Will you please come to England, Gandhiji?"

"On conditions," he answered.

"What are they?" I inquired.

"I will come if you will go home and convince your people and your Government that they must give Home Rule to India. Or if you will go to the Lancashire cotton magnates and persuade them to stop sending their goods here."

"Is there any easier condition?" I inquired.

He paused a little. Then very deliberately he answered: "Yes, I will come if you will rouse public opinion, stir the churches, get hold of Members of Parliament, convince Cabinet Ministers that what you have seen here as regards your Government's drink and opium policy is thwarting our passion for the prohibition of these two evils."

I pondered a little. I had seen some horrible things. Then I said, "I rather think I will take that on."

Then I discovered what it meant to keep the "Vow of Truth" which was evidently considered by Gandhi to be part of the bargain. "You must see everything you can," he said. "You've already seen Anasuya's school for Untouchable children, themselves regular drinkers before she weaned them away from it. You must go to the opium shops

licensed by the Government. You must see the English secretary of the Prohibition League and get information from him. You must go to excise officials, too, just in case they can prove to you that your opinions and mine are all wrong."

I accepted the wisdom of these tactics, but demurred when the further requirements of truth-telling followed.

"You must go to the Governors of Bengal and Bombay and tell them what you intend to do on your return home. It's not fair to leave their provinces intending to talk about conditions publicly without giving them notice. The Viceroy, too, should be seen."

Heavily burdened though I felt, it was obvious that this technique was only common fairness and common sense.

"On your arrival in London," the evenly pitched, inexorable voice continued, "you must go to the India Office and see the Secretary of State, Lord Birkenhead."

"No!" I exclaimed, "I really can't!"

He paused for a moment, then continued, "Nevertheless, it must be done. Why do you shrink? The worst they can do is to refuse to help you. In that case you will turn their refusal into your strength."

I started that afternoon. I collected from Indian Civil Service officials, from Excellencies and from people in the India Office further proof of what I had seen and heard. This "Vow of Truth" stood me in good stead at the many big meetings which I addressed during the following twelve months in England. Every sort of critic seemed to be in my audiences; the hard-boiled person "who had spent as many years in India as the speaker had days"; the complacent patriot who cannot bear to think that Britain ever does anything wrong (a few regrettable incidents occurred in the past, perhaps, but things are different now); the brewer's agents who honoured me by devoting a leading article to my discredit in their daily paper. All I had to do in rebuttal of their charges was to state that my quotations were furnished by Government officials.

I left the Ashram and started on a two months' tour. My hosts were Indians. It was amazing to see the surprise of the Hindus on finding I was a vegetarian and had been for many years. As for being a teetotaller, they wouldn't believe it. They thought British people could

not live without beef and beer. I used to notice the puzzled expression on the faces of visitors when they found me enjoying Indian customs. A whispered colloquy would ensue; amazement increased; soon, serenely smiling, the newcomer would approach me, make a formal speech of welcome, and invite me to stay in his home next time. Handed on from one delightful home to another, I have travelled across India, and up and down it three or four times.

I have gone to Western houses too, to the so emphatically British residences of our Viceroys, Governors, and Civil Service officials. I feel miserable at nearly all of them. The crimson plush and gold-braided attendants who wait on their Excellencies worry me. I have rarely experienced such discomfort as I had to bear all the time I was with a certain Indian official whose power extended over a wide district. His attitude towards a Nationalist who called on me was a thing to ponder long upon. Was it showing off, or fear, or pride? In any case, I knew I had to take the blame for it. Our Empire conditions human beings to act so.

After all these years, the two races have taught each other many things both good and bad. We contracted the custom of bathing after seeing its vogue in India. We learnt from them that an indisputable mark of a man of God is serenity. There must have been many other benefits tending to mutual enrichment, but it is mainly the harm we were doing to each other that it was my lot to witness. The sense of grievance and resentment on both sides seems chronic. Irritation is always simmering just below the surface, scarcely concealed. It bursts out in the British in flashes of temper. It turns many Indians' thoughts inward to bitterness and self-distrust.

Each race experiences a deep-down disgust at the treatment of animals by the other. The Hindus feel horror at our careful breeding and tending of them in order to slaughter and devour them. The British can scarcely bear to be in the streets and see the unpleasant things done to oxen between the shafts of a cart. The two races apparently taught each other to snatch. When something is handed to a man by a servant, a clerk, or a friend; he snatches it from him with a peculiar gesture. I have studied the pattern of this snatch very carefully and sometimes reproduced it to the principal sinner. Whether British or Indian, he

had no intent of rudeness. It is almost inevitable for the British to get swallowed up after a few months by the great imperialist machine. Various Excellencies have tried to keep free from it, upholding our island tradition of friendliness, fairness, freedom. Vested interests in the *status quo* see to it that such originals are thwarted. There are a lot of unhappy British liberals in India.

In one province my Indian hostess, a leading Nationalist, hesitated before promising to call for me in her car after a visit I was paying to the Governor. She always wore khaddar,[1] and such was not welcomed, she said, even in a car outside the front door of the Residence. It was accepted etiquette to change into Western clothes before going to the Collector's office to pay one's taxes.

"Santiniketan" means the "Abode of Peace," and is the fitting name for Tagore's school and college community, where a little house was put at our disposal. Meals were brought from the school kitchen. Dan'l and I spent nearly a month there, learning many things. I was the only foreigner to witness a strange ceremony in a remote country district in Bengal. Ten thousand Santals, the aborigineees, Untouchables all, were being initiated into Hinduism. An immense enclosure had been prepared, a dozen clerks engaged to take down names, a dinner prepared, a little rustic temple made, a holy fire kept blazing, a huge tent set up. Some of the candidates had walked twenty miles to reach this place. They were experiencing the highest honour they could dream of, to be accepted by the Brahmins as their brother Hindus, touchable, fellow diners, worshippers in the same temple.

The simple forest dwellers wandered about delightedly gazing at the immense throng, the solitary foreigner, and best of all the seven or eight Brahmins in their saffron robes. All day the ritual continued. It consisted of a brief conversation with each convert; putting the sacred yellow mark upon his forehead; the announcement that he was now a Hindu; kneeling in the little temple; the repetition of a Sanscrit prayer phrase by phrase, led by the Brahmin officiating; the contribution of a little butter to the holy fire; and the common meal. After a long exhortatory speech, they returned home with a couple of gifts, a small framed picture of Krishna and a packet of cigarettes.

[1] Homespun, homewoven, the sign of a Gandhi follower.

"How did you like it?" one of the Twiceborn[1] asked me when it was all over. What was I to say? I hadn't liked it. I had definitely preferred the natural, primitive Santals to the somewhat portly Brahmins whose air of complacent proprietorship smacked of the perennial type of prominent Churchmen in every country and in every century who have held back spiritual progress and hindered people from getting near to God.

My many Brahmin friends are of a wholly different calibre. One is a brilliant lawyer in the south. He retired from practice after joining Gandhiji's movement and gathered round him in the country a little community, disciplined by manual labour, service of the country, and prayer. For miles around, workmen have been able to free themselves from debt as a result of the crafts they have learned at his centre. Another is a business man who happened to be travelling through an area where flood had caused widespread distress. A month or two previously he had turned a deaf ear to Mr. Gandhi's statements about famine. Now he had to face the hideous facts of gaunt faces and diseased bodies. He went home, sold his business, bought a tract of land, and set up a spinning and weaving centre which ever since has given employment to many hundreds. Another has been serving the Untouchables in Travancore for many years. He started a tailoring business for them and a number of schools. So thoroughly has he done his job that, as he told me with real pride, "They are now self-reliant enough to have turned against my program. They think they know better even than Gandhiji."

Here in the midst of a vast conglomeration of wretchedness, this band of men and women is undefeatable because they have cast out from themselves the paralysis of submission and the poison of bitterness. They are building a new India.

An English magistrate of the Indian Civil Service said to me once: "Do you know what Mr. Gandhi has done for India? I will tell you. Ten years ago if I were riding down a narrow lane and my horse swerved aside and I saw an Indian coolie had crossed the path unexpectedly, I would have shouted at the man to get out of the way. He

[1] Brahmin.

would have disappeared, cowering. If the same thing were to happen today, the man would stand up straight, look me full in the face, and quietly say, 'Why should I?' That is what Mr. Gandhi has done for India."

Early in 1927 I arrived home. I found Father his usual cheery self, interested in everything, and now wanting me to start a nation-wide campaign to arouse public opinion against our Indian excise policy. He confessed he had had a bad illness, but had made up his mind he must not die while I was in India. He rather thought, however, that he had lived long enough. Ninety-one years constituted a long inning. Six weeks later he died.

CHAPTER XV

The Haves and the Have-nots

A NEIGHBOUR came round in great distress. Her husband was turning queer, saying terrible things. It had started when young Billie was took. Then the baby died. That upset him something shocking. Of course men aren't used to all the worries of getting ready for funerals. He'd been out of a job for two years. It had made him nervous like. Then only having one bedroom for the seven of them was awkward. They really didn't ought to have had the little body lying out so long, but wot could you do? The money had to be got in to pay the undertaker, and it took time. And now here was Mr. Brown talking about going to prison and she did hope I'd go round quick.

I found Mr. Brown very quiet, determined, polite. He had been receiving relief for his family for so long that the officer had threatened him with the workhouse. That meant the home would be broken up, and the family, too, the children separated even from each other. He had made up his mind to prevent that. If the committee didn't change its policy, he had decided (here he obviously stiffened himself to bear any opposition from me) to go into one of the bakers' shops and take a few loaves. Then they'd arrest him and send him to jail. "Wives and families are prop'ly looked after," he said, "when the father's in quod."

I told him to be sure and let me know when he was about to commit the theft. I'd like to be a witness in court and explain his good motive to the magistrate. Finding approbation where he hadn't expected it unnerved him. Tears showed in his eyes as we made our compact together.

A few days later Mrs. Stanley Baldwin, who had always been a good friend to our children, sent us a marvellously rich, two-storeyed, exquisitely decorated cake in the shape of a circular summer-house, upheld by fluted columns of yellow creamy sugar. I looked at it with growing disfavour. I knew she hadn't bought it herself, but was merely passing on a presentation. But how could our people eat such rich

stuff, they to whom even a little pat of butter was a real treat? Remembering Mr. Brown and his bitterness of heart, I promptly sold it to the biggest local confectioner, gave the proceeds to the Browns, and wrote to Mrs. Baldwin confessing what I had done, and why. I begged her to come and look at things in our neighbourhood for herself. I asked her what advice she would have given to a man in Mr. Brown's position. With her customary thoroughness she turned up a day or two later, showed herself sympathetic with my advice to Mr. Brown and called on the family with more help.

Mr. Brown did not have to become a thief. His weekly relief was continued. After a few months he even got a second room to his home. This does not excuse us from considering what it is in institutions for the poor that causes honest men to prefer jail. East End-ers hold that a plenitude of food and drink, hot water and baths, light and firing, is not an end in itself. Such things cannot be enjoyed except in freedom. In an institution one is not a person, but a number. Even the people who wait on one are regimented, trained, moulded to a type. Everything that enriches their personality tends slightly to thwart the mechanical orderliness which is enjoined upon the staff. Precious little possessions, photos, an old picture postcard, a tie pin, useless things that have stayed with one unaccountably through all the changes and chances of a long life, things that have acquired a sort of sacramental worth, these must all be jealously guarded from the official eye which is hawklike in dirt-searching. They are safest perhaps wrapped up in a bundle or packed in an old cardboard boot-box. They must be preserved at all costs. I have seen old hands clasping these treasures fearfully. Compared with the neat, regulated, exceptionless routine of even the best institution, almost any home seems desirable.

In most institutions one is shorn of the thousand and one little preferences, habits, and distinguishing marks that redound to the glory of God, whose love of variety allows no two leaves to be alike.

Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* appeared in London. The heat of that summer I shall always remember because I spent so many evenings in close contact with the theatre roof. Many parties were made up at Kingsley Hall. We would travel west together, stand an hour or more outside the gallery door, pay our one and threepence, climb up to the

heights, and take our places on the benches. Such narrow benches! And so ill constructed that even those with short legs couldn't sit straight! Our knees had to point all the same way, to the right or to the left. When one of us shifted his position, the rest had to follow suit. I saw the play seven times that summer. Finally I wrote to Sybil Thorndike, feeling she would want to know what *Saint Joan* meant to working-people. I told her how, at the end of the first court scene, a girl thrust her elbow into Mary Jane's ribs and in the midst of all the applause exclaimed, "Coo, Miss, when she says 'Who is for God and for Joan?' don't it make yer feel yer want to jump down on to the stage and stand beside her and shout out, 'I'm with yer'?"

Sybil Thorndike and Kingsley Hall people have been in love with each other ever since. She apparently finds Bow a nice place to stay in. Whatever theatre she plays at, she gives the stage door porter instructions to let any one up to her dressing-room who comes from Kingsley Hall. We are very lucky.

After Father's death in 1928, as soon as the executors of his will began to function, I called together a group of Bow friends and asked them to help me work out some scheme whereby my annuity of four hundred pounds might be diverted into other channels. I pointed out that I was strong, well able to earn my own living, and certainly did not need over a pound a day for the rest of my life. As many of us were Socialists we did not believe in the cumbersome, outworn notion that a small class of people should have luxuries while the majority lack necessities. As some of us were Christians, we knew it was better not to be rich.[1]

The annual four hundred pounds was mine according to the law of the land, but God's law was better, saner, more up to date, more practical. I proposed we should act by it, now that we had a moment of brief power. I would return the check to the executors on the ground

[1] Our Lord was a poor workman. He talked the language of working-people. The poor of every age and every race seem to understand Him as soon as they hear of Him. They never forget His apprenticeship at a joiner's bench. Even in the repressive wretchedness of a casual ward, I've seen His words illegally written on the wall of the yard by disgruntled inmates. "Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." I have seen them chalked on the Embankment pavement by the hard benches where the homeless sleep.

that it was not mine, but belonged to my neighbours in East London. At this point some of the Bow people objected to my reasoning. Of course I was to hold on to the money, they argued. I'd know better how to spend it than any of them. "Anyhow, your good old Dad left it to you and you ought to keep it," they said, trying to clinch the argument. I agreed that he was good and dear, but pointed out that he knew I was going to take up some such position as this. He knew all about our chapter of the Brethren of the Common Table. Nothing could induce me to keep his money for myself and they must help me work out a technique for getting rid of it sensibly.

The meeting was adjourned, but the discussion went on. During the week I noticed one of the club members looking specially worried. I knew he had had trouble. Every bank holiday his firm closed down for a week without pay. This necessitated his borrowing two pounds to live on during the week he resumed work. The firm bears a name which is almost a household word wherever the British go, but his wages were such that though a teetotaller, he often could not get the loan repaid before the next bank holiday occurred. I asked him if it was a headache that caused him to clamp hand to head so continually. "No," he answered, "no headache. It's just your money that's worrying me. I can't get it out of my head. You ought to take it, gal, reelly you ought. You'll be needing it one day if you don't now. And even now there's plenty of things you could do with it, you know that. What about if you was to get ill?"

You gentle, generous, chivalrous Bow folk! Could I ever forget you?

At the next meeting things became a little clearer. We decided a committee of local people must be set up to disburse the money. It must not be given to individuals, or else jealousy would be rife and the life of a committeeman made hideous thereby. It must be used to further some plan or scheme for the enriching and widening of the common life of the district. But how form the committee? After prolonged concentration, we came to the conclusion that two sorts of voluntary organizations would cover most people in Poplar, the trade unions and the churches. They must both be circularized and asked to call their own delegates' meeting at which three committeemen and -women should be appointed. But perhaps the most sensible, experienced, and

well-balanced people in our borough are the married women, the home-makers, many of them exploited, all unorganized, most of them unpaid. It would be a pity to lose their help. We decided to call a mass meeting of women who would also elect three committee members. None of these committee members were to be officials; all must be drawn from the rank and file. I was also to appoint three trustees from among my neighbours who would open a banking account, receive the checks as they came from the executor, and disburse the money to the committee for the carrying out of whatever program was decided upon. These trustees had no authority to initiate schemes, to advise the committee or to vote. They had the power of veto only. They could refuse to disburse the money if they deemed any expenditure was outside the terms of the trust. This was to reassure those onlookers who prophesied that the committee would make ducks and drakes of my father's "hard-earned gold." One or two public men whom we had expected to back up our scheme held aloof. Our minds turned to Professor R. H. Tawney, whose book on the *Acquisitive Society* had impressed us. Surely he would give us good counsel. He accepted our invitation, and at the next meeting listened with flattering attention to every point raised. To our intense relief he blessed the scheme. It was a Restitution Fund.

But what about a lawyer? Two refused to act. But eventually Maurice Harwood, the most faithful and devoted of friends, threw in his lot with us and drew up the trust deed. As there was no precedent for such a document, we had to take the advice of counsel who apparently ruled it correct, legal, and even laudable.

The trade union delegates duly performed their job, the churches' delegates also. The mass meeting of women in the Public Hall was an extraordinary affair. Mothers of every sort, size, and stage attended. The trust deed was read out. Its super-legal diction could not hide its good news, and some of the older women vociferously showered their blessings on me, not in thankfulness for the small benefits that might accrue to themselves or their homes, but because of the nice clean-cut divergence it registered from the old notion of the sacro-sanctity of property. The women had many ideas to put forward before electing their three representatives for the committee.

The scheme eventually chosen by the committee was for the setting up of a panel of Home Helps. These were to be sensible middle-aged women who would take half-time employment in this capacity. They should be called in by any woman at any time of need to look after the home if one of the children had suddenly to be taken to hospital, cook the dinner if the mother were ill, clean the house or do the laundry in any emergency, or mind the children if the mother wanted to go out for recreation or pleasure.

Mr. Poole, the committee chairman, led the way in a first-class piece of social service. He has enough letters of gratitude to fill a volume, sent by the women of the district who found the very quality of life changed by having a Home Help to rely on in times of sudden anxiety.

I had no further part or lot in the affair except the duty of taking the chair for the annual public meetings at which the accounts were to be published and the details of expenditure could be inquired into.

Two things stand out clearly from the 1928 days when the Restitution Fund was set up. A subscriber and old supporter of Kingsley Hall and Children's House withdrew his help from both places. If I had so little confidence in my own work that I refused to give my annuity to it, he didn't see why other people should be expected to send money. I wrote back that the temptation to endow Kingsley Hall had been great. It would have saved me much trouble. Collecting funds was a heavy job. But such an action would have been tantamount to giving to one's own child, which sometimes is another form of giving to oneself. Many closely written sheets flitted through the post between this old friend and Bow before he finally decided to renew his subscription as usual.

The other was the kind effort of relatives to save me from my own acts. I enjoyed most a visit from a dear brother-in-law. It is a very difficult matter ordinarily to get him to come to Bow, but now he asked to come, representing the views of others as well as his own. He was primed with every sort of objection from every point of view. We solemnly sat on the roof together for an hour or so while I gave due weight to his queries, examining each leisurely before replying. "Might not the money," he inquired, "as usefully go down the drain? The people would be sure to waste it." "No, I thought it would serve as a means of education even if it were wasted. We learn by our mistakes.

How can working-people train themselves to spend a few hundreds unless they experiment?"

"Was it not giving way sentimentally to the desires of my Bow friends?"

"No! My Bow friends strongly objected to my doing it. In fact I had some difficulty in reassuring and comforting them in their quite real distress."

"Was I not taking my Socialist position too seriously, more seriously, in fact, than some of the Socialist leaders did?"

"I thought not, but even if that were so, it behoved me to go further than they, as I was a Christian as well as a Socialist. I must act individually and personally as well as politically and publicly."

"Was I not encouraging the agitator and the demagogue in their subversive propaganda?"

"No. The opposite seemed to be the case. Open-air orators in Victoria Park had been sneering at Christians every Sunday as long as I could remember, quoting the story of the rich young man and the eye of a needle, and announcing that Christians always wriggled out of the plain duty of acting on those words. When these same orators looked triumphantly round last week after asking their stock rhetorical question, 'Have you ever met a Christian who took those words literally?' the answer came pat: 'Yes. Here in Bow.' The atheist argument fell flat and the crowd enjoyed it. Not that the cap really fitted me at all, because I still had so many resources left."

Finally he asked me what good did I think it would do. I retorted that at least it would teach Bow people how difficult and thankless a task it is to disburse money. If you spend it freely, you're pilloried for extravagance and luxury. If you're careful and economical, you're blamed for stinginess. If you give it away, you're accused of doing so for the sake of getting into the papers, or for a title, or to stifle your conscience. If you invest it, you're counted one of the tribe of international bondholders whose yearly tribute must at all costs be assured whether safeguarding it involves semi-starvation to the workers or a war to keep the trade routes secure.

When my dear brother-in-law finished his catechism, I conducted him to the Underground. He had fulfilled his duty to the family.

Though he had failed in his purpose, he knew he had done a good job. He could afford to let himself talk naturally, now. Chuckling in an infinitely soothing manner, he said, surprisingly: "You know, Muriel, there's a lot in what you say. I must admit that it's generally the extremists who get things done."

Now I had to set about discovering ways and means of meeting my own financial emergencies. I inquired among my neighbours what other safeguards against crises they found it wise to take out in addition to the required Health and Unemployment Insurance. All agreed in recommending the Hospital Savings Association, a voluntary institution, typical of the British workman, managed by local groups with a minimum of friction and expense.

CHAPTER XVI

The New Kingsley Hall

"NOW that we've got a decent place for the children, we ought to have a new Kingsley Hall," remarked Joan Waterlow one day.

It seemed an innocent remark but I reacted violently, vowing that if she or any one else suggested such a thing again, I would ask them to go straight out of the room, or go myself. It was hard enough work already preserving the dozens of new windows in Children's House from street cricketers and raising the income for its upkeep and Kingsley Hall's. I wanted no more property to look after.

From the eminence of the Children's House flat roof, one looked down the street newly lined with trees provided by the Borough Council, houses on each side burgeoning with fresh paint, renovated plaster and recently pointed bricks, to where at its far end a low building crouched, nondescript in colour, designed all wrong, shoddily built.

"Look at the 'All. Don't it look shabby compared with the 'Ouse?" Some one was always saying it.

"Yes," Doris would answer hastily, in order to avert the inevitable suggestion. "but isn't it true to life? It's like the East End mother, content to remain shabby so long as her child is well clad."

"But it's a shame, Miss. Let's get a new 'All," was the reply.

My plea to leave the place as it was awakened no echo. To the others it seemed a retrograde step for Children's House boys and girls, accustomed to colour, space, and garden, to have to transfer at the age of eighteen to Kingsley Hall where there was neither classroom nor committee room, space nor colour. We could not go on for ever borrowing the Children's House schoolroom for the Kingsley Hall singing class, prayer group, church meetings, socials. Perhaps it was unsound to cling so persistently to the old ways. What right had I to put a drag on the soaring ambition of our members? But could a new, well-designed, easily cleaned, perfectly plumbed building ever be so precious as this old hall with its rich tradition of pacifism and public spirit?

The idea of a new Kingsley Hall gained ground, was eventually accepted. A site was found in Powis Road, a conveniently quiet back street leading nowhere in particular. I wondered how many scrubbers and caretakers would be needed to keep such a big place clean, occupied, and with an open door from seven in the morning until ten-thirty at night. If any of our unemployed members were chosen for the job, the position would be so enviable that jealousy would probably vitiate the whole atmosphere. I had watched this poison work its havoc in many characters, some of them quite unconscious that it was dictating their preferences, criticisms, and resultant actions. I pondered continually on this problem. Could the new hall avoid this wearisome and never-ending process? One day a blessed idea suddenly entered my mind. All my worries vanished. We would engage no caretaker. We would all take part in the cleaning, stoking, floor-polishing, door-keeping, and locking up of the new Kingsley Hall. Seven of us would form a household. One should be secretary. Another should cook dinners. We would take turns at getting breakfast and six o'clock tea. Kippers, haddocks, bacon, eggs, and porridge are easy to prepare. Each of us would have a weekly day off; there would always be six people left to see to things. Any man or woman could volunteer to join us who would give full-time service in return for food, shelter, laundry, a dress allowance to be determined by the household on the basis of agreed need, and two shillings a week pocket money. There would be no specialization in manual work. We must all take our turn at each job. If a thing needed doing, each of us must be ready to do it, whether it were our turn or not, even if it had been left undone through some one else's fault. Private feelings were not to count. We were there first to serve God, then to serve Kingsley Hall, lastly to please ourselves. We would clock on in the kitchen at 6:50 A.M. with the regularity of factory workers. We would demonstrate the fallacy of the capitalist theory that only by the motive of private profit and by the fear of dismissal can the best work be secured.

All this sounded challenging, fine, and quite impossible, without a strict and self-imposed discipline of prayer. For a quarter of an hour before breakfast, for ten minutes before tea, and again at 10 P.M. with the club members, we would meet in the Sanctuary for silent prayer.

We had often discussed with Mr. Voysey, the architect of Children's House, what sort of building would best express the truth, beauty, and goodness of God and man's effort to recognize these ultimates in the common life. The blue prints of the new Kingsley Hall satisfied us.

We had three public ceremonies to prepare for life and work in the new Hall. The first was a rather mediæval blessing of the site. To visualize the ideas spoken in prayer, the men of Bow secretly prepared three life-sized figures of straw, painted ugly linen faces for them, dressed them in old suits and hats, and labelled them Greed, Sloth and Scandal. Unseen, these were propped up in a row behind the doors of the dilapidated warehouse that was to be pulled down to make way for our foundations. The crowds that had gathered to witness the ceremony, following every word on the service papers, and joining in the responses, were just about to disperse when suddenly the door was burst open from within and the objectionable vices were violently ejected by unseen means. The people seized upon the figures, tore them to pieces, and burnt them.

Months later came the bricklaying. Rain steadily poured upon us throughout the ceremony. Workmen had perched themselves aloft on the scaffolding, gazing down upon these exalted bricklayers. John Galsworthy suggested they might form a union, there were such a lot of them, but we could not do with less. We wanted so many good and blessed things incorporated in our building, and we had chosen their representatives with care.

Then we gathered round a deep hole in a block of concrete into which a sealed bottle was to be deposited containing our message to posterity. We had worked for some time on this idea. It came to us on hearing one of the workmen casually remark "This place is being well built. It'll last a thousand years." We had let our imagination run ahead as to the state of mind of our descendants at that date and what they might want to know about our state of mind. A number of members had written them letters. We lifted sentences from each to make a composite message. It was written on parchment, in indelible ink borrowed from the local Registrar of births, deaths, and marriages. We included with the messages a few things that had significance; a Kingsley Hall membership card, a postage stamp, a sixpenny bit (our

prettiest coin), and a copy of Mark's Gospel translated into very modern English by Canon Pym for the soldiers and sailors in the war. One of our babies was to drop the bottle into its concrete millennial bed, but in spite of the blandishment of his father, the workmen standing by, and Doris who has a genius for children, young David Gould would not part with his toy. His cries of protest at its loss rivalled the closing song of praise.

A few days before the opening ceremony in September, 1928, the little inadequate group of us seven volunteers came quietly into the new Hall to take up residence. We were overawed by the exquisite Austrian oak in the Sanctuary and Place of Worship. The sight caused some Bow people to catch their breaths. "You feel you can't help running your finger along it," said one of them. The polished oak floor was laid in such a manner as to break up the reflection of light from window or electricity into scores of patterns. It reminded us of the sunset glow reflected on wet patches of seashore sand as the tide recedes. The arches over the windows and the semicircular chancel were so designed as to prevent the worshipper from noticing that the ceiling of this church was flat, and high above it were club rooms, kitchens, bedrooms, and a garden.

We roamed round the precincts of which we were the self-constituted guardians, this heritage of beauty for Bow people of future generations. Many had stinted themselves to give five shillings for fifty bricks, five pounds for a window, or twenty-five pounds for a cell bedroom. If we were to hand on our trust at the end of our year of service in as perfect a state as we had received it, there was to be hard work and no quarter given to moods, jealousy, fear, or slackness. We had put a red glass goblet on the altar, symbol of the Holy Grail, and from it, early one morning, we knelt and took the sacrament.

Next day the opening occurred. There was a stand erected outside for the opener, the late Lord Knebworth, who at the right moment rapped on the closed door of the new Hall. He demanded that it should open to the King of Glory. Inside was a hidden choir of men's voices to shout in chorus the inquiry, "Who is this King of Glory?" The answer satisfied them. They threw wide the doors, and there was a great hush. All sections of the Hall had been training themselves to

desist from vulgar chatter and exclamations of "Oh!" and "Ah!" when the beauty of the place should be suddenly revealed to them. They knew they must look to neither right nor left and above all not behind, but to walk forward singing to a grand old Hebrew marching tune the special words of dedication written for the occasion.

The one chosen to enter first was a young member admired and trusted by all. He carried the old cross that had preceded our first march to the House of Commons in 1919. After him came Lord Knebworth, then Doris and I and the rest of the trustees. It was a minute or two before I realized there was any one following. I thought some hitch must have occurred, so absolute was the quietness. But some eight hundred people were there.

The first household comprised an ex-factory girl, an ex-teacher, an unemployed man, a German student, a secretary, a lady at large, and myself. They were a grand set to work with. We learned a lot from each other. We plumbed the depths of our own weakness. We never achieved a wholly punctual time sheet. We used to come together every now and then, especially when we'd failed a little more obviously than usual, in order to take ourselves to task. On one occasion we all faced my question with something approaching horror. "Are our ideals wrong, after all? Are they perhaps impossible? We keep trying honestly. We never achieve. Perhaps we must in honesty give up believing that the thing can be done." There was a long silence. Then Alf Butcher, the unemployed workman, spoke with authority. "They're not wrong. It's us."

Time and again we stared at our own failure, appalled. We continued floundering along at a job much too big for any of us, trying hard to clothe an idea in the actuality of brooms that got lost, and furnaces that we didn't manage too well, and electric lights that people would forget to turn off, and huge areas of polished oak flooring that must be kept as beautiful and reflective as on the day they were committed to our guardianship.

We all got shabbier and shabbier as the agreed sum of five shillings a week for clothes seemed to melt away. There was no time to make frocks now, hardly enough to mend stockings. Our comfort was the box of old clothes which various friends used to send us for jumble

sales. We took first pick ourselves these days. Meanwhile, we had to keep all the activities of Kingsley Hall in full swing. It was gratifying when the neighbours, realizing our full schedule, began to help. Some would come to cook the dinner once a week, others to wash up. One would scrub the stone staircase; it takes a surprising number of stairs to reach our roof. Another would do lobby duty, and others would look after the weekly cleaning and polishing of the sitting-room.

In the roof garden, given by Mr. A. A. Milne, stood Gilbert Bayes's fountain, the replica of the big one presented to the International Labour Office in Geneva by the trade unions of Great Britain. Here a few flowers, shrubs, goldfish, and a hesitant water lily were beginning to put in a rather abashed appearance. A charming life-size child in coloured terra-cotta spurts water out of a dolphin's mouth into a basin lined with blue mosaic. She stands there waiting, the top of her head just visible from the street beneath. A Kingsley Hall member, passing on his way to work each day, confided to some one, "Muriel does spend a long time saying her prayers on the roof! Whenever I pass, she's there."

People who like to know each morning exactly what is to be required of them during the day cannot stand life at Kingsley Hall. "Here we have no abiding city" might have been written up over the doors of the seven cell bedrooms which divided the roof into two narrow strips. Visitors from abroad or from the country were continually turning up. We were always vacating our rooms. At first we only thought how lucky we were to entertain such interesting people, but after a time, when we realized how little personality each cell had, and began to paint our single hard chair and diminutive cupboard in bright colours, to import bedcovers and curtains to match, we became less pleased at turning out at a moment's notice and sleeping in the loggia. Girls whose homes were far from London needed a *pied-à-terre* wherein to spend the daily two hours and the weekly day off. When the sense of security and continuity is lacking, when there is no square inch one can rely on as one's own, something happens to the human being. Our valiant efforts not to be acquisitive constituted something of a strain. However often we compared ourselves with the people of the neighbourhood, ashamed of our plentiful food, spacious hall, separate

rooms, we came at last to think that any sort of private house was preferable to a community house whose door is never shut. Living in Kingsley Hall was like living in public. We were never free from inspection and interruption. Whether we spread our meals in the sitting-room or on the roof, it was certain that a face would appear round the door; some one had a query to be answered, a bit of news to give, a grudge to get ventilated, or accounts to be checked. Each meal served for seven would probably be stretched to satisfy ten before it was over. It was good experience, but wearying after a few years. Even one's cell was no safe refuge. Neighbours would roam all over the building, seeking out the person they wanted. Cell windows can be conveniently looked into from the outside. Running water in a bathroom used by three or four people at the same time may or may not be better than a tub and a kettle of boiling water in one's own room which locks and has no windows at eye level. As for food, our cooks were rarely real cooks. Whoever was least ignorant of the art was given the job. Hence they lacked originality. We ate off a rough board table painted blue; our cups, saucers, and plates scarcely ever matched; our cutlery consisted of other people's cast-offs. I noticed more and more of our neighbours contracting the habit of asking the household to their homes to tea. Food served in a tiny gay kitchen, on the best china, with the kettle singing on the hob and the tea exactly right seemed nectar and ambrosia. There was a good deal to say for "living private," though we were supremely proud of Kingsley Hall and would not have changed our lot for any one else's.

In this rarefied air of constant stimulation we were grateful for the quietness of silent prayer. Blazing a new trail is intimidating, and it was downright frightening to contemplate what might result if one forgot for a single day to consult the compass. So I was liable to be a bit doctrinaire. Day and night my mind was set on this job of getting a little community in East London to function as servants and lovers of their neighbours, coöperating with God by restoring their birthright to His dispossessed children, the birthright of music, art, poetry, drama, camps, open-air life, self-confidence, the honour of building up a new social order, the Kingdom of Heaven, here and now in Bow.

Opportunities for reading had to be snatched in the Underground,

at midday dinner which was served in the clubroom at small tables, during tooth-brush time. A club member fixed a bookrest on the bathroom wall near the mirror. Thus G. M. Trevelyan's history books were absorbed. I wished I could get Bow people to read history; but psychology, economics, and contemporary happenings are the choice of the intelligentsia there. The gratifying precision of Euclid's exercises would have helped them, I was convinced, and my nephew, Daniel Hogg, agreed with me and started a class for them. Only three joined, but he found it well worth continuing, though as funds were low it often entailed his walking twenty miles from his Hertfordshire home to the nearest Underground.

When I could find no more Trevelyan, I extracted from our library shelf one of seven brown, closely printed, ancient volumes that had been unopened for forty years, Agner Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England.* I remembered their place in the Loughton home and how we used to scorn the very look of their Victorian stodginess. They proved a mine of shrewd observations, feminist bias, historical scholarship, sprightly quotations from thirteenth-century love letters and fourteenth-century laundry lists. To read history checks the tendency to too much windy talk. Several household members fell into the habit of endless discussion. Having come from conventional homes into the freedom of Kingsley Hall, they often lost their balance. The friendliness of their new neighbours in Bow delighted them; they enjoyed with dangerous ease the good-fellowship and confidence that had been won by many stalwarts of the past; sometimes they wasted and dissipated it.

One day a high and potent police official came to see the Hall. His visit stands out in my memory because of the long period of reëducation I had undergone when first coming to Bow and shedding my native middle-class illusions. Like all my tribe, I had believed that the police force consisted of thousands of nice understanding men, the modern equivalent of the knights of chivalry. It was natural, therefore, that when a neighbour told me of a rather dangerous breach of the law occurring in the house next to his and wondered what steps we could take about it, I answered, "Tell the police." The wide-eyed stare of surprise which greeted my reply was speedily camouflaged for politeness' sake. But I begged him to enlighten me. What followed seemed

to show that law-abiding working-people had an opinion about the police diametrically opposed to my own. Then came the Goddard case, which disclosed much corruption in the force and proved perturbing to those comfortably placed people whose garden walls, park fences, and staff of servants act as a shock absorbent and make it easy to evade facing such unpleasant facts. I consulted an eminent stipendiary magistrate about it. He added to my little stock of unpleasant stories many more from his own experience. An article he had written at the request of a well-known daily was regretfully returned to him because he refused to cut out an episode which reflected discredit on the police. The editor's apology explained that he relied on the force for advance news which would certainly not be forthcoming were he to print this paragraph.

Other leading magistrates were less original. "I believe in our men," one assured me. How nice for him! It's comforting to believe in one's underlings, to accept their reports, calculated to please, and prevent criticism. To be dependent for one's facts, however, on those who depend on one for pay, promotion, and employment is not likely to lead to brilliant administration.

Any one who cared to walk along our streets in Bow could see the bookies and probably talk with the child who was clasping a fistful of coppers they had given him to keep on the watch for the man in blue and give them warning of his approach. Very occasionally one of them would be arrested, his employer paying the fine or rewarding him more substantially if he had to spend a week or two in jail.

All this came back to my mind as I led my eminent visitor from his shining car, through our place of worship, clubroom, and library, up to the roof. We leaned over its parapet, surveying the parish. He was manifestly impressed, a little sentimentally so, perhaps, by the contrast between the squat houses and beer shops below and the serene, cool spaciousness above.

"From a high place like this, one can get an excellent view of the bookies." I made the remark nonchalantly to see how he would take it.

"Ah! If only some of my men could get a sight of them!" he retorted, fervently.

It was my turn to stare now. Was he really as ignorant as all that? Or was he misjudging my intelligence?

"Your men know them well," I responded.

He did not answer that remark. I led the way downstairs. At the bottom flight he congratulated me on the work and my great unselfishness. I explained rather shortly that there was little unselfishness involved in having so good a time as I always enjoyed. I had hoped to evoke something different.

Our family seems to favour the national disease of rheumatism. My share was not serious, but a nuisance on occasion. I heard that Cæsar's legionaries returning home after service in Britain were often sent to sulphur springs to get the rheumatism sweated out of their systems.

I went to Zurich, where my friend, Dr. Bircher Benner, twenty years before the pursuit of vitamins became fashionable, had revolutionized his methods by the use of raw foods and baths. His is a wonderful place and has cured numbers of my friends and relatives, but oh! how I hated his régime. To get up at six thirty on a January morning, go for half an hour's walk on an empty stomach in such bleak cold that one's hair literally freezes, to return to a meal of fruit, no coffee, no tea, no bread, no marmalade. Deplorable! And to know that no proper meals were forthcoming. I took to my couch after breakfast, but soon had to go with a score of others and do physical jerks in a bathing-suit for half an hour. During the morning a bath would be prescribed, hot and ice-cold water continually alternating. The only way I could bear the savage onslaught of the cold was to imagine that I was a homeless tramp out on the Embankment in the rain at night.

Twice a day came the baths, and after each another half-hour's walk. It wasn't what one might call a walk. I crawled in a spiritless fashion through the freezing pinewoods. I could almost hear what Pepys would say about us, writing it down perhaps in his diary because our wretchedness impressed his comfort-loving heart. "This morning during my walk abroad I met the ladies coming out of the Pump Room. I found them very low, very low indeed."

But the Bircher method always works, and I came home in February for the lunch and public meetings to celebrate Kingsley Hall's fourteenth Foundation Day, the first in the new Hall. I was nearly late

because the engine of my train froze before it left Switzerland. I enjoyed seeing political opposites at the annual lunch we began to arrange for subscribers. Mrs. Stanley Baldwin and I had come personally very near to each other through exchanging ideas on prayer. At one lunch I put her next to a very dear Bow friend, Maggie Stone,[1] tall and large, a fried-fish expert. They were evidently getting on well. Maggie, who is never shy, beckoned to me as I passed behind them after welcoming a late comer. "Muriel," she said, with her nice wide smile, leaning back and talking to me over her shoulder so as to include Mrs. Baldwin in the conversation. "Surely this isn't very good staff work to put two stout ones like Mrs. Baldwin and me together."

Kingsley Hall began to lose its members. They were trekking out to Dagenham, where the London County Council was providing new houses, each with a bath and a garden, for a quarter of a million people. From all parts of London they arrived, strangers to each other with no common bonds, no local traditions, no knowledge of the neighbourhood. After the easy, intimate relationship of the East End, where in any time of trouble a dozen people were ready to help and a hundred to be interested, people felt abashed, lonely, and awkward. Bow people missed Kingsley Hall, the shops, their neighbours, their lodgers. "Can't you start a Kingsley Hall for us here?" they kept asking us. "Can't you put up a place for the children, anyhow?" was their next request, and of course Doris listened to that. A mother told us how the first Sunday after their arrival the children had gone out to find a Sunday school. They roamed over the estate for three hours and came home crying, unsuccessful. There were a few, but only a small proportion of the children could be accommodated. "And now the election's coming and what do we know about the whys and wherefores? Of course we shall vote labour, but you do like to get together, don't you now, and ask a few questions and discuss a bit before polling day?"

It seemed quite mad, but it had to be done. We bought a site, got a caravan, set up a marquee. Doris started a graded school, play hours,

[1] Maggie led a sit-down strike on the hop-field once. A new and illegal method of measuring the gathered hops resulted in the pickers earning only sixpence for five hours' work. People were actually going hungry. Maggie induced ten or twelve of them to sit on the bins with her until the owner should have to come. After hearing Maggie's straight sense, he changed the whole procedure and everyone benefited.

a club for men and women, and a Sunday service. The first night Doris and I spent in the caravan on the site, a harassed newcomer from Bow passed it on her way home and quickened her step apprehensively. She thought its presence betokened gipsies. "That's just one more misery in this outlandish Dagenham!" she grumbled to her husband that night.

Gladys Owen, our most faithful friend and devoted helper at Children's House, accepted the leadership and made her home in the caravan. Gradually the site was fenced in by voluntary labour and a temporary Kingsley Hall erected. Dagenham had our best. Miss Pullen succeeded Gladys Owen and under her régime a beautiful low brick Children's House was erected. The Nursery schoolroom is vermilion and silver. The Shaftesbury Society took over responsibility for the Dagenham work in 1933. But as Doris is chairman and I president, it is carrying out its original program. The group working there under the leadership of Sydney Russell have now completed plans for the putting up of a permanent Kingsley Hall.

CHAPTER XVII

Across the Atlantic

IN 1930 we had a two days' retreat to consider the financial situation. There were now nine of us at Kingsley Hall. Our weekly seven shillings did not amount to much, but the cost of living and of fuel, electricity, washing and cleaning materials was heavy. Members were paying in their dues well. For every pound we received from the subscribing public of the country, ten shillings was raised in the Hall or by its members. Still we needed more. The treasurer and trustees talked together knowingly about figures, and eventually decided to send me to America to lecture about East London. We drew up a program including such titles as "Thirty Years in East London," "Ways of Praying," "Four and a Half Years as a Socialist Alderman."

This was fun for me. I fell in love with the United States. I enjoyed its people, its climate, its trees, its spaciousness, its hills and its good earth. Since this first visit, I have returned to its blessed hospitality almost every year.

I had expected something quite different. I had always harboured something rather like a grudge against the country because I had once gone gazing through a lovely old house of my favourite Tudor period and found in the best room, where the fireplace should have stood, only a ticket saying it had been carted off across the Atlantic by Mr. Somebody Somebody Somebody. I had grown seriously perturbed lest their money were to denude England of its beauty. But in the States I found no such vulgarity. I had really imagined that gangsters made the streets unsafe, and so blissfully reassured did I become that I made a point, while in Chicago, of wandering about alone in the small hours of the morning, looking for them.

I like the fine stature of Americans. Once as I watched the nursing staff of a Montana hospital assemble for a lecture, the girls seemed almost of another race than ours, so tall and strong. On returning to

London, I gazed up and down the station platforms, amazed at the contrast.

I like American manners. They seem to me super-good. Yet Americans are always surprised when I say so. I think there's something splendid in their straightforward directness. I covet their freedom from self-consciousness, the bane of us British. "Going to America" is an experience we all ought to have. It does something to one. I've often tried to think what it is. In some way it gives one a new confidence in life. It's hard to explain how.

Chicago furnished me with the friendship of three world citizens, Jane Addams of Hull House, Mary McDowell of University Settlement, and Graham Taylor of Chicago Commons. Over and over again in subsequent visits, I've enjoyed myself at each of these settlements and learned a little wisdom from their founders. How complicated a situation they had to deal with, surrounded by an everchanging population, people who could only speak Polish or Mexican or Italian, people of a different religion, unable even to join in a silent prayer!

Friends and relatives coming to Bow dread our rich variety of unsalubrious odors. But a changeless all-pervading smell of blood hangs over the stockyards where Hull House stands. Jane Addams had spent most of her life in this stench. One expects heroism like that in her. But it was a far greater achievement to attract into this atmosphere such a numerous company of men and women. Into whatever group of Americans one is introduced, some one present has stayed in Hull House and is proud to say so.

Gay courage and humour characterize Chicago Commons. Its head, seventy-year-old Graham Taylor, said he had given orders to his doctor that under no circumstance must he be allowed to die before Big Bill Thompson was ousted from his mayoralty. Big Bill has been removed. The fight for a clean city is still being waged by the cheery doctor, who has made overtime use of body, mind, and spirit.

The first Round Table Conference was in session in London during my stay in Chicago. The papers carried word for word accounts of the speeches of the Indian delegates. Mahomet Ali, the leading Moslem, an old friend of mine from the days of the Indian National Congress in 1926, appealed to the ruling monarch, George the Fifth, to change

his policy towards India, and to remember how his ancestor, the third king of that name, lost a great colony in the eighteenth century by refusing to tolerate its people's aspirations.

In Pennsylvania I stayed with Henry and Joy Hodgkin at Pendle Hill, the Friends' college near Philadelphia which had just been founded. There were about twenty scholars. They were like a family, an interracial family, including Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Scottish, and Negro students. They shared the housework and the scholarship, honour and shame. When they went into the city for a show, none would enter the theatre until assured that the Negro brother was also welcome.

Washington cast its spell about me. On a gently rising hill not far from the city, the first President's home, Mount Vernon, reveals to foreigners what they might easily miss, caught in the swirl of contemporary life. As I looked over George Washington's estate, preserved as he left it, the outhouses where yarn was spun and cloth woven, the living-quarters for the slaves of this solid country gentleman who had lived most of his life as a good British subject, the house and its furniture seemed to me so like our own of that date that it gave me a shock to realize that we were his enemies. The spare bedroom where Lafayette was entertained interested me particularly. It must have meant so much to the young republic to have a friendly visitor from a great nation. The French stretched out a welcoming hand to them. I felt almost like an interloper, knowing we had not bothered to understand, or to help. Assuming a stern attitude, we had thought to preserve our dignity. But such an assumption generally has a bad ending.

My headquarters were Friendship House. It was like being at home to find children overrunning the place, in our rooms as well as their own, in garden, street, and playground. I have never been in a nursery school where the children fit so naturally into the grown-up life of the place. They might have been brothers and sisters of the residents. There was no sign of that noxious growth, the over-trained pedagogic voice.

Lydia Burkline had done a good job there. Under her guidance, a coloured nursery school was functioning in the next street. I liked the

ten or twelve short plaits of hair standing straight up from the middle of ten or twelve squares into which each brown head was divided. I gloried in the Negro child's sense of colour, his humour, his innate gift for music; I was overwhelmed by his lack of self-pity, his forgiveness, and his friendliness. A Negro friend once allowed me to see down into her heart. As she transferred her little girl from one bed to another, she let me hold the sleeping child in my arms for a little. Afterwards, I asked her how she had overcome bitterness, that most paralyzing of human weaknesses. She thought for a time and then told me that it still reared its head when she thought of her child. Negro mothers necessarily dread the day when it first dawns on the child that he is different from other children. Psychologists impress upon us the importance of maintaining the child's sense of security, from its mother's arms onwards throughout life. But early in the development of every Negro child, there comes this rude awakening.

I returned to Bow after an absence of four months with gifts and lecture fees to tide Kingsley Hall over a difficult year.

CHAPTER XVIII

The East End Looks at Mr. Gandhi

TROUBLOUS times in India made front-page news again. Those who were in close touch with the leaders out there, and those others who invested twopence halfpenny a week in Gandhiji's weekly paper, were not surprised. The Indian leaders had clearly stated twelve months previously that they would wait one year in the hope that we would change our minds or hearts. If there were no sign thereof they would have to act in their own way. Now the stage was set for a nation-wide act of civil disobedience to compel attention to their claims. It came in the scene of the salt march. I have never been impressed by the skill or accuracy of our secret service in India. It is expensive enough to warrant something better than repeated assurances that "Gandhi's influence is on the wane." This desired item of news gains widespread credence, usually just before it is proved once more to be a complete fabrication. After much prayer and preparation, surrounded by ardent spirits, well-tempered by continuous self-discipline, Gandhiji set out on foot from his Ashram on a pilgrimage to the salt marshes by the sea. It would take a week or so to reach their destination. There they would commit an act of defiance to Government by making salt. To ignore the monopoly on that important article in the diet of the poorest peasant would also symbolize their devotion to the dispossessed.

It was a popular gesture; everyone who wanted to could understand it. I received a postcard from Gandhi which said, "On the eve of setting out on what may prove a life and death struggle I write you. Of all my friends, Indian or foreign, known and unknown, you are by no means the least." That is characteristic of this least sentimental of men. Analysed it amounts to this; that I am not rated least among his millions of unknown friends.

Then followed an epic struggle between those who had power to inflict baton charges, threaten, imprison, and beat to death, and the

people who could only suffer cheerfully and without bitterness. The prisons of India were full to overflowing.

Mary Campbell arrived at Kingsley Hall. We had last met in India when she took me round the licensed drink and opium shops in Delhi, explaining the Government excise policy which seemed to both of us lamentable. Stirring events had been taking place since then, she said. The women of the country had risen, left their sheltered homes, torn down the veil and played a brave part in the national drama. Gandhiji had called to them from his prison cell. After her thirty years' work in India, she had seen the transformation of its womanhood with amazement and pride. She watched scores of Delhi women methodically station themselves in couples outside each licensed house and request every intending customer not to enter. She saw the crowds gather to watch this strange sight. Women who had covered their faces from men for forty years were now standing in the public streets, quiet and self-possessed, defying imperialism. She saw the police come up and warn them that they were causing congestion in the traffic and must, therefore, go home. But was it likely, having decided to disobey their own conventions, traditions, sacred rules, that they would be intimidated now by a policeman's order? Once more they were asked to move; otherwise arrest would follow. The women ignored the order. Still more people thronged the streets, Miss Campbell among them, to see the police wagon arrive and great burly policemen pick up the little purdah women and drive off with them to jail. Sales of opium and drink fell to zero. Even people who wanted to buy were ashamed to do so. At first the shops were shut up. Then the owners made the salesmen open them. How they hated staying there all day alone! They too were ashamed. All over India the same sort of thing was happening. Thousands of high-born women were in prison. Miss Campbell was glowing with pride in her Indian sisters.

The thing we had been longing for happened. Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, responded to the urge of the spirit within him and, breaking through the cast-iron barriers set up by the imperialist machine, brought Mr. Gandhi out of his prison cell to confer and pray with him in Simla. That section of Simla society which is less aware of the things of the spirit experienced some chagrin when Mr. Gandhi arrived in the summer capital and began driving to and from Viceregal Lodge at will in

his borrowed car. In the narrow streets of this super-select town, no car is allowed but the Viceroy's and the Commander-in-Chief's. Rickshaws are the only wheeled means of transit.

Perhaps the two men were closer in spirit to each other than either was to most of his fellow countrymen.

The pact was front-page news in London. It seemed certain that Mr. Gandhi would decide, after all, to come to London for the Round Table Conference. Then, of course, he must stay at Kingsley Hall. Where else could he get a bare-walled, stone-floored cell on a flat roof and live among working-people as he was accustomed to do in India? I wrote him at once, and his reply was carefully worded. I took it straight up to Mr. Polak, an old friend of his South African days.

In his office stood C. F. Andrews. They had evidently been discussing arrangements for hospitality. There were plenty of good offers to consider, ranging from that provided by His Majesty King George to all delegates in the West End to the Hindu Arya Bawan in Hampstead, which was already being redecorated and made ready for his use. I produced the letter just arrived from India. There was no mistaking its purport. "Of course I would rather stay at Kingsley Hall than anywhere else in London, because there I shall be among the same sort of people as those to whom I have devoted my life."

C. F. Andrews immediately recognized and accepted Gandhi's intention. Mr. Polak argued steadily, politely, and convincingly. He was one against two.

"We must, in spite of his desires, consider first his health," he said.

"Bow air is good," I answered, "Sooty but definitely healthy."

"Ah, but it is altogether too far from St. James's Palace," he objected.

"The car drive there and back will be restful to him," I suggested.

"Others in the West End would also enjoy his company," he reminded me.

"They can get it all day long," I retorted. "Let him have the company he likes, at night, anyhow."

We were winning! We were winning! I shot my last bolt. "Isn't it time some one broke through the old custom of letting diplomats and ambassadors confer only with diplomats and ambassadors? The people

of Bow can understand the sufferings of the people of India better than even the most sympathetic and sensitive diner-out. Will peace ever come until it's based on the will of ordinary people? Let Mr. Gandhi be the first plenipotentiary from a foreign land, summoned to an imperial city, who throws in his lot with the working-people."

So it was arranged. Kingsley Hall once more shuffled the furniture round and left a row of five cells suitably bare for Mr. Gandhi's party. Soon our post showed how many rumors were flying uncensored over the country. Scurrilous insults came from strangers, and letters of congratulation from people hitherto known to us only by fame. One subscriber vowed never to give Kingsley Hall another penny; others contributed a check or a loan of cups, saucers, and plates to ease our prospective burden; a picture paper showed me anxiously searching for a few goats with which to provide my guest with the only sort of milk he drinks; another reported we were going to keep the animals penned on the roof. The actual fact was too dull to print, merely an order to the local dairy to provide one pint of goat's milk each day until further notice. A talking-picture was made of us polishing the brasses and working on the roof garden, although cleaning and polishing are routine affairs at Kingsley Hall whether a conference delegate from India is expected or not. I had been on the screen once before when the Ovaltine firm had kindly made a film of the Children's House Nursery School. I was playing for the children's march and by error the piano got photographed. But to hear oneself speak is an experience of a very different calibre. The mirror acquaints us from babyhood with our appearance, until our reflection becomes at last, I suppose, our oldest friend. But it's strange indeed to hear one's voice. A totally surprising voice mine was to me. I rather liked it.

The Communists held a protest meeting close to Kingsley Hall, calling with customary thoroughness at every house, leaving a printed statement declaring Mr. Gandhi to be a traitor to the people, the ally of big business, and a camouflaged Imperialist. They wrote to me personally, explaining that I mustn't interpret this action as aimed at myself or at Kingsley Hall. It was only against Mr. Gandhi.

I tried to be very polite to the never-ending stream of journalists,

but soon began to fail them badly, one of them almost unforgivably. Not knowing her name, this is the only apology I can make. I tried to remember the claims of the Indian students in London and agreed with their plan to meet Mr. Gandhi at Friends' House and march with his car when it set off for Bow. I let them down too, lamentably, when the time came and excitement grew and the crowds made one nervous.

Laurence Housman took the chair at the crowded welcome meeting arranged for him at Friends' House. He said:

"We welcome you as bringing something which is not generally understood—the unification of politics and religion. In church we are all sinners, but in politics everyone else is a sinner—that is a correct description of our daily life, and you have come to call upon us to search our hearts and to declare what our religion is. You are a strange man. You are strange to many, even in your own country. You are a stranger to the people in my country. You are so sincere that you make some of us suspicious, and you are so simple that you bewilder some of us."

The people of Bow were massed in the street and inside Kingsley Hall, awaiting their guest. After a reception by the mayor, Gandhiji went on the veranda to greet the crowds below. Finally he climbed the last flight of stone stairs and reached his quarters on the roof. Powis Road stretches at right angles to the row of cells in which he stayed. Householders found they could just see his head when he walked from one cell to another or to the roof bathroom. There'd be a sudden cry, "There 'e goes!," or "There's Gandy!" and mothers would rush out to join the men, gazing upwards. That Sunday, they say, many a dinner was spoilt. The wise mothers were those who aspired to no higher culinary art than a stew. A boiled dinner doesn't easily spoil, though one Powis Road mother admits that she rendered hers inedible by salting it three times over.

The first Saturday evening stands out memorably in the minds of all who were at the Hall. Joy Nights were something of an institution. They cost threepence, took place every Saturday, and were prepared for by a group of men whose serious and careful program-making filled their every Thursday evening. It was the mothers' and fathers' night. They could bring their small children. It consisted of competi-

tive games, dancing, a stunt or two, refreshments, and finally "Auld Lang Syne," sung by the whole company making one huge circle, holding hands with their arms crossed. The younger fry, between eighteen and twenty-five, had a very different sort of program upstairs in the clubroom. The under-eighteens were probably entertaining themselves in most sophisticated style at the old Hall or in Children's House.

In the middle of this party the corner door leading to the staircase suddenly opened and there stood Gandhiji, gazing delightedly at the animated throng. They had been hoping against hope that he would come for a moment and they yearned to stop their activities and stare and cheer. But "manners is manners" in East London and will continue to be long after they're forgotten elsewhere. This man was their guest. They must not lionize him or make him feel as though he were still in public. He had walked into an evening's party in his own home. That was all.

He stood quietly until I remembered our blind member and began to pilot him among the crowds to the opposite side of the Hall, where she sat. As he passed through the throng, everything became immobilized. It was like a moment of suspended animation, as though everyone was holding his breath. As he shook hands with the blind woman and began talking to her, people gathered round in silence, leading their children by the hand or carrying them. As soon as he turned round, they pushed them forward and kept still. One put a child into his arms. I've never seen quite the same look on our people's faces before or since. Then the music struck up and a dance started. As he stood by the piano, up came one of the mothers and said, "Mr. Gandhi, come and have a dance with me." With a look of surprised pleasure at being treated with so little ceremony he thanked her, adding: "But I'm afraid I don't know how to dance. Will you see that I learn, please, Muriel?"

For nearly three months, his every week-day was full and long. Often he arrived home at two or two-thirty in the morning, was always up for his prayer at four o'clock, went to sleep again till five-thirty and then out for an hour's walk before breakfast. This consisted, like most other meals, of oranges, grapes, and goat's milk. He ate in the cell with window and door wide open to the freezing

December air. When Charlie Andrews and Horace Alexander, his most regular visitors, and I went up to him after our own hot and hearty meal downstairs, we wore woollen clothes as well as overcoat and muffler. He was wearing a one-piece homespun cotton garment, with perhaps his white Kashmir shawl round him. But it was always we who caused the door and window to be closed. The open ventilator sufficed us.

The week-ends were always a joy to him. He stayed at Balliol College, Oxford, at Cambridge, at Birmingham, at Chichester, and most enjoyable of all, perhaps, at Canterbury with Dean Hewlet Johnson.

The invitation that interested me most came from one of the unemployed cotton operatives of Lancashire, who wrote a long letter describing conditions in the cotton industry and asking him to come and see things for himself. The writer declared that his admiration for Mr. Gandhi was deep and sincere, although his leadership of the Indian movement was responsible for much of the misery of unemployment from which he and other Lancashire workers were suffering. Gandhiji immediately accepted the invitation. It was what he had long wanted. English business men who heard of the projected visit exclaimed, "For goodness' sake, don't let your guest go up there."

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Why? The cotton operatives have suffered so much that they'd tear him to pieces."

Gandhiji seemed better to understand our people than their fellow countrymen. The Sunday he spent in Lancashire was one of his happiest days in England.

There was much guesswork among his London acquaintance as to whether he would alter his style of dress to attend His Majesty's garden party at Buckingham Palace. His *khaddar dhoties* were easy to wash, not so easy to dry even on the spacious Kingsley Hall roof, but, fortunately, unnecessary to iron. One folded them up, left them, and all was well. But the white Kashmir shawl was not amenable to laundry work. When it looked off colour, it was turned. Several times this process occurred. After the royal party I asked him how he had dressed. "I just turned the shawl inside out again," he explained.

A couple of detectives tagged along behind him on his morning

walk. They were portly. He walked fast. When the watch pointed to six o'clock and he turned back, the men had a minute or two to mop their brows while waiting for him to get in front of them again.

There were generally five or six, sometimes ten or a dozen other people taking this constitutional with him by the late autumn and winter starlight. Some of them drove in from long distances, others came by Underground. Bow people would accompany him, too. On one occasion we found the three small Bishop children waiting in the street, eyes sparkling, fingers crimson with cold. The night watchman on duty where the road was under repair was always on the lookout for him. Two women down our street would get up early each day to wish him good-morning as he passed their houses. Once when some navvies greeted him, he did not hear. A near-by workman couldn't let that pass. "Gandhi! Gandhi!" he shouted, "those chaps said good-morning." The mistake was rectified.

One day a message came from John Morris, a blind patient in the local Poor Law Hospital. "Would Mr. Gandhi come in and see him, as he could not get out to Kingsley Hall?" There was no hesitation in the manner of acceptance. Early next morning the whole ward was furbished up to enjoy a six-o'clock visit from the Indian leader. An old neighbour's rheumatics kept him a cripple sitting always by the kitchen fire, a dull enough life at any time. And now he was missing Mr. Gandhi! He, too, sent a request for a visit. He, too, got what he asked for.

The Nursery School children, hearing it was his birthday, prepared their present. It consisted of woolly lambs and other toys dear to four-year-olds. He came to Children's House to accept the gift, the only present I have ever known him to keep. On the long journey home he insisted on carrying the fragile little things himself in order to present them unbroken to the children of his Ashram school. Our children called him "Uncle Gandhi." One of them was much concerned that he had no proper shoes and socks. Mustn't he be cold? Thereafter several of them kept him daily in their prayers.

One day he set out to explore the children's enclosure of the little park in St. Leonard Street, followed by an excited procession of children, like an Eastern "Pied Piper." He specially admired the chute

and the giant's stride. I think the small onlookers quite expected him to test them.

On the way home, he called at some of the little three-roomed homes. One mother was caught at the ironing-board. "Ah! I can do that!" he exclaimed. "It was my regular duty on the farm in South Africa." He went upstairs and into bedrooms, asking searching questions as to rent and wages. This would have been counted bad manners in any English visitor. It was considered correct in him. The neighbours noticed all his habits. A workingman who lived opposite Kingsley Hall, on his way to night shift at 1:30 A.M., often met him returning home after his long day's work. Yet at 4 A.M. his cell was always lit up for prayer. The workingman summed up his character thus: "He never missed once; regular as clockwork he wos. Now, that's wot I admire in the man. He must have got weary, but he never gave up. I'm not religious myself, but . . ."

One Sunday evening he broadcast to the U. S. A. from our sitting-room. Because he arrived five minutes late, they asked me to fill in the time with an introduction. Friends in California told me afterwards that as a sort of running accompaniment to our voices, a twittering sound was audible, incomprehensible, staccato, something like birds, but not quite. It was the children at shrill-voiced play in the L. C. C. recreation ground far below us. The radio people had taken many precautions to keep the ether solely for him, but in the East End, children, I am glad to say, are ubiquitous.

Evening prayers were always held sometime between 5 and 7 P.M. perhaps in the car on the road, generally in the Knightsbridge office, once in the House of Commons after a meeting of M.P.'s. I had never experienced quietness in that place before. One could hear Father Thames through the open window, swirling along the stone walls.

After his talk with Charlie Chaplin on the condition of the workers of the world, prayer followed quite naturally. The East End streets, outside the Indian doctor's house where the friends of the poor were entertained, were jammed with many thousands.

Once he caught a cold, a slight affair, but the West End people begged him to spend the night there to avoid the long drive home. "I won't spend a single night in London away from Bow," he told them.

"There I'm doing the real Round Table Conference work. I'm getting to know the people of England." That work progressed, but the Conference lagged. What Gandhiji thought right, Sir Samuel Hoare called rebellion. They both strove for unity. Apparently it was not attainable. His return passage was booked for December.

The boat sailed from Naples. He invited some British friends to accompany him across the Continent. He was giving himself and us a few days' holiday. The Paris terminus was pandemonium. The streets of Lausanne were almost impassable. But in the villa of M. Romain Rolland he revelled in quietness and beauty. The friendship of the two men was a real thing, though it must have been strange for Gandhiji to meet his biographer for the first time. On one of the early morning walks when the Alps towered above us in cold starlight, Pierre Ceresole met Gandhiji. The conversation soon turned into a statement of Gandhiji's beliefs, clearer than any other I had heard.

"Truth is God, and the way to find Him is non-violence. A leader must have complete mastery over himself. Anger must be banished, and fear and falsehood. You must lose yourself. You must not please yourself either with food or sex pleasures. Thus purified, you get power. It's not your own, it's God's. Look at me. Wherein does my strength lie? I am nothing. A boy of fifteen could fell me with a blow. I am nothing, but I have become detached from fear and desire, so that I know God's power. I tell you, if all the world denied God, I should be His sole witness. It is a continual miracle to me."

In Rome he had talks with Dr. Montessori, Tolstoi's daughter, the King's daughter, and the Duce. Signor Gayda asked him many questions about the Indo-British position. He answered them frankly and with his usual moderation. Notes were taken by Italians and by Gandhiji's secretaries. They were the usual sort of questions. As soon as the ship was out at sea, Signor Gayda communicated with the press, and England was flooded with stories of "Mr. Gandhi's perfidy," how no sooner was he out of the country that had given him such a warm and heartfelt welcome than he turned traitor and told the Italians that he was hoping to take full advantage of our moment of financial strain to weaken us still further. The press messages sounded so pernicious that many British who were convinced friends of India felt

themselves disillusioned and deceived. Signor Gayda sounded friendly and innocent, Mr. Gandhi the most false friend. Gandhiji's denials sent to the India Office from Aden by cable, the denials of those who were with him in Italy, the denials of his colleagues left behind in London, were insufficient to shake the testimony so promptly furnished by Signor Gayda.

Gandhiji's welcome in Bombay was triumphal. He at once tried to get in touch with Lord Willingdon, the new Viceroy. But the smear of the Gayda interview had poisoned relationships. Conditions were made, deemed impossible, refused. The new era of confidence was gone. . . . Very soon Gandhiji and most of his leading supporters were again taking steps which they knew would inevitably lead to jail.

CHAPTER XIX

Odd Jobs

I WAS summoned home by the news that Doris and seemingly all the rest of the Children's House helpers were laid low by flu. Thermometers, pills, aspirin, complications, lungs, hearts, mastoids, sweats, and gallons of fruit juice absorbed most of my energy for a week or two. Doris was sufficiently recovered for me to take her down to the Dover boat en route for Zurich on Christmas Eve. I tottered back to Bow; perhaps I walked straight, but that verb seems in retrospect the most apt. There were many others still in bed, in their homes near by, at Children's House, and in hospital.

I began to write the story of how Bow entertained Mr. Gandhi. I worked at it every day from eleven to three. I had the inestimable help of Mary Jane's brother, Geoffry Pullen, who worked at the manuscript, rearranging paragraphs, lopping off excrescences, detailing sentences wherein the preposition lagged, tucking the same neatly away somewhere in the interior. He had performed the same office in the previous year when *Ways of Praying* was getting published.

I had come into touch with Agatha Harrison through her secretarial work for Gandhiji and for C. F. Andrews. For years I had admired her work for the children employed in the cotton mills of Shanghai. Now she encouraged me to hope for a publisher, and eventually produced one. She is that perfect sort of friend who always delivers the goods. Mr. Nicholson of Ivor, Nicholson, and Watson, offered to take the book before he had read it, a vastly comforting procedure for a chatty and discursive scribbler such as I. Then I went through the agony of expecting a phone message calling off the arrangement, but it didn't come.

I lost a little of this unpleasant self-distrust when Mr. Cutts of Hodder and Stoughton's called at Kingsley Hall to ask me to write another book on prayer for them. They had a series of small purple linen-bound ninepenny volumes that were selling very well. J. M.

Barrie's *Courage* was in the series. ("Pour encourager les autres," I was sure.) My stature seemed to increase as he talked. A glow spread through my whole being: I hope I didn't look as fatuously amiable as I felt. I suggested a title, rather a good one, we both thought—*Why Worship?* He asked me for the probable date of completion. It was to be only five thousand words. I glanced professionally at the manuscript in front of me, did some rapid calculation, and named a date in June, greatly impressed by my own certainty.

People were growing deeply ashamed of our foreign policy. Day by day fresh news of Sir John Simon's acquiescence in China's dismemberment at the hands of Japan reached us. One found oneself hating Sir John. That was a danger signal. A Christian pacifist must go deeper than that. But bitterness was hard to banish. I felt proud of our dock labourers who refused to load a ship with munitions bound for Japan. Three of our leaders, Maude Royden, Dick Sheppard and Herbert Gray, put before the country their plan for a peace army. Only those men and women were invited to join who would be willing to stand in with invaded, attacked, or bombarded people, bringing to bear against their assailants the tremendous spiritual weapon of active creative good-will. A thousand joined at once. Expense held them back from effective action. Various member states of the League of Nations were asked to sponsor at the next Council meeting our offer of intervention. None was willing.

Soon there burst over the country the news of Gandhiji's vow to take no food until the MacDonald Award was amended. This came as a shock to Hindu and Briton alike. Substantial concessions would have to be made by the orthodox as well as by the India Office. Could the complicated business be accomplished in time to save his life? A fearful sense of urgency oppressed the session of the India Conciliation group, hastily called by Agatha Harrison. There were prayers in Churches. There was a constant flux of cables between the two countries. There were all-night efforts to find a *via media*. C. F. Andrews was in continual contact with the India Office. As for Bow, people talked in hushed voices outside Kingsley Hall and on the pavement under the tree Gandhiji had planted was written an invitation to passers-by to come into the Sanctuary and pray. Tremendous relief was

felt throughout the nation from Government circles downwards when news came that satisfactory alterations had been agreed to.

The autumn of 1932 took me to the States again. I left Bow with all the more confidence this time, because Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Gray had accepted our invitation to spend the winter at Kingsley Hall. It was an interim period between leaving their old home and moving into another. The weekly class Mrs. Gray led in "Home-making" was exactly what our girls needed most. Both these good friends fitted into the life of the place superbly. The memory I like best is of Herbert before breakfast kneeling down and tenderly ministering to the sitting-room fire, the lighting of which was one of his jobs.

I made the same sort of American tour as before; but a much shorter one. On the morning of Armistice Day I spoke at an open-air meeting in Washington Square, organized by the War Resisters of New York City. As a foreigner I gained a much more favourable hearing for Christian pacifism than would have been accorded to their own countrymen, my colleagues said. In the afternoon I spoke at a great indoor demonstration before a theatreful of people in Philadelphia.

The most memorable episode of this autumn was the few days' visit I paid to Saratoga Springs. I stayed with George Peabody and his daughter, Mrs. Waite, whom I had met in London. Within the first few minutes of the drive from the station to "Yaddo," Mr. Peabody and I found our point of contact; we were talking politics; we touched on the peril that comes from the possession of power, the havoc it works in human personality; we agreed that in Government headquarters there might well be a place kept silent like the Sanctuary which had impressed Mrs. Waite on her visit to Kingsley Hall, a place where no word except of prayer is to be heard, where any entrant can be sure of seclusion, can rely on being undisturbed.

I learnt a lot of English history during a picnic when my host showed me the battlefield of Saratoga. One needs to go to the States to feel adequate pride in one's fellow countrymen of 1776 who threw off an ill-fitting yoke and decided to manage their own affairs.

Things were going ill with China. Nevin Sayre, the secretary of the American Fellowship of Reconciliation, an old friend of mine, asked me if I would be willing to go the following autumn to Japan

and China if the F. O. R. people in those countries would support my visit, arrange meetings, give me hospitality, and pay all travel expenses after my arrival there? Could I spare the time? Could I raise my fare to and from London?

This suggestion seemed to Doris and me the natural fulfilment of what we had been working for during many years. Kingsley Hall had stood for the breaking down of racial barriers and the spread of international brotherhood even in war time. At the ceremony of brick-laying for the new Hall, a Chinese representative had supplied us with a Chinese proverb to express our faith—"Under Heaven, one family."

The common sense, the inherent sanity, of our East End workmen had stood us in good stead so often and clarified so many tangled issues which intellectuals have to spend nights and days in arguing about, that I began to feel their point of view would be of value in the Far East. I had already proved its usefulness in India. Perhaps the day would come when our own statesmen would come to the East End to learn its wisdom. Now that the people of China and Japan were being sucked into the whirlpool of hate and fear, one ought to go there and give the same message to both countries, a message not of easy words and of dogmatic theory, but a sincere greeting from people who knew from experience the bitterness of war and who yet kept themselves clear of hate, held on to their faith in the way of Christ, and refused to consider any one as their enemy because they happened to have been born on a different patch of earth. Apart from all this, however, one thing made it easy for me to accept definitely Nevin Sayre's suggestion that I put in six months' work in the Far East.

Thirty years previously I had discovered a fact which history lessons at school had taught none of us. Great Britain had waged two wars to force the Chinese to buy our opium from India. At first it had been incredible. Then the burning shame was so great that it seemed to me I could never hold my head up again. I tried to think of something I could do about it. There was nothing. I found everyone eager to let bygones be bygones. The Boxer rising and the consequent European expedition had been so ill reported that many people were willing to consider that by and large we were now quits, China and England.

All I could do was to go on feeling ashamed. Now was my chance to make amends in some infinitesimal measure for the old outrage. I had spent most of the previous thirty years doing odd jobs in Bow. Now my friends there would speed me Eastward with their blessing and at the same time accustom themselves to carrying on the activities of the Hall without me. There were many fine workers at both Children's House and Kingsley Hall.

I arrived home from the States just in time for Christmas. Our program at Kingsley Hall was generally the same; a house party that any one could join; a midnight service with the crib made for us by the sculptor, Gilbert Bayes, lit up by two rough wooden candelabra; the figures are life size and the ox and ass painted on canvas at the back of the stall look friendly and understanding; a hot soup supper in the kitchen at 1 A.M., carol-singing down courts and alleys and outside George Lansbury's house. Most memorable of all was the visit to the ward of incurables in the local hospital. There is something poignant in the soundless welcome our carols get there.

Foundation Day this year was a special affair, as it marked the thirtieth year of my connection with Bow. Plans were being made definite for going to the Far East. I was to earn my ocean travel fare by speaking in the States. It was with surprise and delight that I suddenly realized it cost no more to come home via India than via the States. I had expected, after Father's death, never again to have the means to go there. Hearing that I was starting off at the end of August for a tour of the world, two of my nieces elected to accompany me, Dorothy and Rosemary Hogg, the daughter-in-law and younger daughter of my sister Kathleen. I vowed I'd take no responsibility for either of them, and as they didn't seem to mind such un-auntly callousness, we got on well together and laughed our way across the Atlantic. In the States we kept separating and joining up again. The three of us were together for the glories of the Grand Canyon. The sunrise is wonderful enough, but for the sunset I happened to be alone on a promontory. It was almost intimidating, like a vision of eternity.

CHAPTER XX

The Far East

WE SAILED through the Golden Gate on the *Asama Maru,* and reached Tokyo in October. Only a month for the whole of Japan! My Fellowship of Reconciliation hosts and hostesses had made careful plans so that I should be quickly accustomed to Japanese ways. Dr. Kagawa called the morning of my arrival. The second day found me the guest of a Japanese baroness. There I learned to assume a new posture at meal times, sitting on my heels, not nearly so easy as squatting in India; or had the seven intervening years stiffened my muscles? The bedroom delighted me with its paper walls, tiny sunny veranda, speckless floor, and the luxurious mattress laid thereon.

My interpreter was a young genius, the daughter of the general of the Salvation Army in Japan. Between meetings she told me something of her father's life, how as a young factory worker he happened to enter a Christian church, was gripped by the atmosphere and message, returned again and again. He longed to be baptized, but the minister couldn't believe that this poor ignorant boy really knew enough to be received into the church. He bade him wait and take instruction. As his long working-hours made attendance at classes impossible, the boy grew discouraged. At last the desire to enter into the new life became so strong that he decided the rains from heaven must provide his symbol of the washing away of sin. One day in the dinner hour he slipped up the factory stairs and out on to the unused roof. He took off his coat and stood with bowed head. He felt a blessing come upon him. He returned to his afternoon's work a new-made personality. A young Samurai threw in her lot with him. They married. As their daughters grew up each asked why she couldn't have a bright silk kimono to wear on holidays. "Would you like to look so different from all your sisters?" asked the mother, pointing

to the part of the house where twenty or thirty ex-prostitutes were learning other trades, their kimonos a uniform grey.

The Samurai tradition, it seems, predisposes one to the understanding of Christianity. Most of the early converts in Japan were of the noble class. Perhaps no other race has been trained from infancy in a discipline that prepares one for following Christ. For us Western Christians, it is a difficult thing even to contemplate obeying the dictum:—"If any man would follow me, let him take up the cross daily." The cross was not an honourable symbol, a design in architecture, an ornament. It was an instrument of torture. Every day to be ready cheerfully to die in torment! Most normal people shrink from the thought. But the Japanese Samurai are taught just that from childhood onwards. It is an integral part of their tradition. They take part in a contest in the Emperor's name and lose. Suicide is apt and fitting. They stand sponsor for another who proves worthless. They can only wipe out the shame by death. When the Indian poet, Tagore, was in Japan, the inhabitants of a remote country district greatly desired him to come to them. Two humble emissaries were chosen to prefer their request. They waited upon the great man in his hotel. He was impressed by their invitation but told them his health did not allow him to accept it. Bowing many times, the two countrymen politely retired. When Dr. Tagore left his room some time afterwards, he noticed the men waiting in the corridor. Hours later they were still there. He asked his interpreter what it meant and was horrified to learn that these men could not go home. They had been chosen by the community to accomplish a certain task. They had failed. They could not face the shame of returning. Possibly at nightfall they would kill themselves. The poet quickly called them in and gave them some specific messages to take back to their people.

"A Samurai is never hungry," is a saying that reveals their self-discipline. In one of their great historical plays where the son of a murdered feudal lord is being kept in durance vile, one loyal retainer is allowed to attend him. When he cannot procure enough food to satisfy the child's cravings, he reminds him of this traditional convention. The child responds and makes no further sign of suffering. One does not acknowledge one's miseries nor wailfully assert the guilt

of the enemy. If there is insufficient food, one merely refuses to be hungry.

A Samurai must weep only thrice in his life, at his father's death, his son's death, and his Emperor's. The tears must be unaccompanied by facial distortion. They too are disciplined. One finger removes the moisture from each eye. This attempt completely to disregard one's feelings may predispose one to morbidity, but such self-mastery has accomplished marvels. Still greater works will it do, when at last a sufficiently great idea grips Japan, an idea greater than industrialism or military power, an idea adequate, worthy, commensurate with the profundity of the human spirit.

I stayed near Shiba Park where the trees are loved and cherished like children, where at the appropriate season the lotus pond is surrounded by crowds of workmen standing silent at sunrise, waiting to hear the buds open as the slanting rays first touch them. Acts of worship such as this remain, though the super-rapid industrialization of the towns effected in the last few decades has abolished much beauty. One has a sense of deep gratitude to the innumerable temples which have salvaged a space of serenity in the midst of ugly streets; in their courtyards one can always find a pine, or a fir, carefully nurtured and tended. It gives one a bad jolt to see the contrast between their timeless beauty and the ugly little buildings erected to house the Christian church. Most of the chapels and churches I saw in Japan are built in pseudo-Gothic of the Victorian variety, surely our worst architectural period, doubly lamentable here where even real Gothic would be alien both to national tradition and to physical environment. Generally one found no beloved tree, no garden, and no flowers surrounding the Christian church. But inside it, what a treasure of character! My conception of a Christian pastor has changed since coming to know Japanese and Chinese ministers. I stayed in one minister's home, and what I heard and saw there made me newly aware of the "filthy rags" of pseudo-righteousness in my own pleasant work at Kingsley Hall. He and his wife had had a hard life bringing up nine children and putting each through college on the diminutive salary of a minister. Often they could not sleep, for anxiety. Sometimes they had not enough food. They were a little worried

in case it seemed to me disloyalty that they could not encourage their children to follow in their steps and become ministers. They assured me eagerly that each of them helped in Christian work in one church or another, but they had hesitated in suggesting the choice of the ministry as a life work. I reassured them, saying that ministers in many a country place in England were in like circumstances and felt the same. They were amazed, I think, to hear that foreign ministers were ever poor. I think they could not easily visualize such an individual. Once Mr. T. had been given the opportunity of leaving the country and taking a big church in Osaka. It provided a good salary. But he would not go because at the time he and his wife were teaching a brothel-keeper who had appealed to him for instruction in Christianity. He knew she was not yet established in the faith, and might slip back if their daily visits ceased. Eventually he helped her into an honest business, and provision was made for all her girls.

Men and women of this calibre, people who had determinedly faced difficulties, failure, and poverty, gained new courage from hearing about the long-drawn-out battle waged in East London against the anti-social power of vested interests in drink, vice, and militarism. The struggle for decent houses, higher wages, education, and places of recreation, which started a generation before my time, was good hearing for my new friends. There is a tendency in the Far East for people to imagine that the excellent social services of the West were achieved without difficulty, were almost indigenous. So they contrast the situation of their workers with ours, and feel sometimes ashamed, often dispirited, occasionally hopeless.

Another thing that surprised them was the long preparation one needs, the training not from books but from a humble sharing of common experience, before one can get to know a neighbourhood sufficiently well to serve it. An apprenticeship of seven years is not too much. They especially enjoyed the story of how the Poplar Borough Council disobeyed Government orders and spent ten weeks in prison before they gained the concession needed for the welfare of their citizens. They were deeply challenged by hearing of the inextinguishable witness of individual pacifists in the midst of a nation for four and a half years mobilized, body, mind and spirit, for war.

Dr. Kagawa took me to his coöperatives, the farm, the school, the shops, and the clinics. The work most pleasing to me with my unhappy experience of money-lenders in the East End, was his coöperative pawn shop. I became a member of his coöperative hospital. It takes only twelve shillings to join, and for that one can attend as a patient at any time and enjoy free the services of some of the best doctors in the city. It was a joy to get to know Mrs. Kagawa and the children, to stay in their little house, to share their meals.

My program was heavy. I preached in churches, lectured at colleges, talked with small groups, and spoke to some hundred or so of the richest business men of the city by special request on "Voluntary Poverty in India and England." I also inspected the Buddhists' social work, and visited numerous settlements. Once at the beginning of a long day arranged by the staff of the leading newspaper in Osaka, when they itemized for me the lengthy agenda ending in a public dinner to which all the social workers of the city were invited, I am told that I blenched visibly. I suddenly rebelled. I wanted a day off. I wanted to go to the Kabuki Theatre. There is nothing in the world to approach Kabuki drama for sheer artistry. I wanted to go to the Puppet Theatre. I was only in Osaka for one day and its puppets are the most famous in the world. I didn't want to see a single settlement. I felt a definite distaste for all good works. I muttered something under my breath, and happily the nice Japanese man next to me was an understanding sort of person and asked me what was the matter. When I confided to him my incorrect feelings, he exclaimed: "Thank goodness! I'll see to the tickets. We fixed up this program thinking you would have a mind bent on such things. It will be a pleasure for us to change it."

He was as good as his word. All I had to do was to be photographed chatting with the editor, meet a select group for lunch, make a speech to them, be entertained by the social workers of the city at dinner, make another speech, see one settlement and one school. The rest of the day was bliss. After an early afternoon rest in the private room of the hotel, fan and kimono provided, I was taken to the Puppet Theatre. There is nothing like it in the world. The puppets are hundreds of years old; their clothing is of exquisite material and

colour. They are manipulated by highly trained men who count a lifetime well spent in acquiring first rank in their art. Only a few attain the privilege of appearing on the stage unmasked as they attend to the puppets. At one moment of the classic tragedy, I counted sixteen men performing some sort of subsidiary service to the four central wooden figures.

In the evening I had my first taste of Kabuki drama. Such perfection of beauty is as indescribable as a nightingale's song in an English wood in May when hawthorns stand round clothed in moonlit fragrance. The hospitable newspaper presented me with two carved and painted wooden figures, old men of ancient Japan. They stand on my mantelpiece here in Bow as I write, a perpetual reminder of how the gloomy forecast of a day may prove to be delightfully wrong.

During the days that followed this memorable holiday people kept begging me for news of Gandhi's Non-Violence movement in India and for details of the pacifist movement in Europe. Sometimes it was a little overwhelming, the sense of expectancy in a handful of students, or among a group of college professors. They wanted details of specific actual happenings. This exactly suited my ingrained preference for facts that can be visualized rather than for theories that can be discussed. They extracted a promise from me to give permanent form to these bits of pacifist history by writing a book for them to translate into Japanese. A definite charge was laid upon me after addressing a club of particularly advanced women: "Miss Lester, we, the women of Japan, are too recently emancipated to have been able to set up an organization of our own. We have no means of giving our message to the world. Will you give our message for us? Please tell the world that we, the women of Japan, are solid for peace." I was proud to have the privilege of giving this message wherever I went.

In whatever part of Japan I travelled, I knew that Government agents were with me, listening to my speeches on war resistance. I was therefore especially delighted to be asked to broadcast. I had several intimate talks with Mr. Amau, one of the Foreign Secretaries of the Imperial Government. It was inevitable that he should counter my dislike of Japan's imperialist policy in China with a *tu quoque* as regards Britain's treatment of India. "Do you want independence

for India as much as you want it for China?" he asked. I was glad to be able to tell him that thousands of British people were spending time and energy in working to free India from the imperial yoke, for India's sake and for our own.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Saito, in the course of a half-hour's talk said that Japan was carefully studying the situation in England to discover the influence of the woman's vote. They had not been satisfied that so far it had improved matters. Our policy seemed more reactionary than formerly. Therefore he could not consider favourably the plea of Japanese women to be given more representation in the nation's councils. This excellent and kindly man, who was murdered in the army rising of 1936, tried also to explain to me that the Japanese mill girls' wages, which we deemed so tragically low, were enough for her simple needs because her work was only a temporary affair—marriage was her real career.

There was poverty visible everywhere in Japan, and in the northern island where we went for a week the situation was serious, verging on starvation. This was being courageously tackled by expeditions of relief from Tokyo, sponsored by well-known writers, educators, and social workers.

The people seemed to know very little about what was happening in China. The sight of wounded soldiers returning from Shanghai caused spectators wonderingly to enquire what they had been doing. They were told, "These are our noble men who have been over in China helping the people there get rid of their bandits."

"Tell us if it's true that people all round the world hate us?" was the final question put to me at the end of a dinner party given by some public-spirited women intellectuals.

There was tenseness in the silence that followed the request. I put up a prayer. Trying to tell the truth is difficult. Then I said: "Yes, I think it is true. You see, when we British were seizing our Empire, radio wasn't invented; communications were embryonic. We could gobble up some huge area and no intimate details of the transaction would be known to the general public. But nowadays at every breakfast table round the world there is a report of every new bite you take out of the living body of China."

There was an anguished silence. Very gently I continued, "Did you know there was a gramophone record in Geneva, made in Shanghai, recording the cries and screams and groans of wounded and dying civilians?"

"It's propaganda!" exclaimed one of the women.

"No," I answered, "it's the desire to know what is happening. We British women can speak to you honestly like this, only because we know what it's like, ourselves, to be hated all round the world. D'you think we can't feel it as we travel about? We've borne it for many years and it's a terrible burden. Now you are beginning to share the same experience. It may be, in the providence of God, that you are the women destined successfully to combat imperialism, to show the world how inevitably the ruthlessness of militarism destroys the value of what it tries to save. We women are guardians of life. Some of us in England are working pretty hard against our own imperialism. Aren't you being called upon now to take up your share of responsibility?"

Missionaries in every city opened their houses to us. They were our tireless teachers. One young American couple had come to feel they had no right to their well-built foreign house when on one side of it slums were contiguous, and under-nourished penniless university students on the other. They had moved with their children and some of their furniture up to the second floor; their dining-table was a wooden adjustable shelf in the passage at the top of the stairs. That left the ground-floor rooms at the disposal of the students, where they could run their own club, enjoy the library, hold their meetings and discussions, experiment in self-government, and taste the delight of a Christian home.

We embarked at Kobe for Tientsin. China was another world. At first it seemed full of coolies, men who seized our bags, boxes, umbrellas, and rugs, and disappeared with them in three or four different directions at the same time. There was nothing to do about it, so we just waited. The fight that seemed imminent among the rickshaws twenty yards away did not happen. From the midst of the shouting four coolies disengaged themselves, carrying back our baggage. "You may rest your burdens on our hearts," they adjured us. It was no vain boast. The Chinese are good friends to have.

My host and hostess in Tientsin were American missionaries. The first thing they arranged for me was to acquire a Chinese name. Western names cannot be written in a language with no alphabet. They took me to a Chinese scholar, told him what they hoped I would do in China, and left him to find a name for me as much like Muriel Lester as Chinese characters allowed. Next day it arrived: Lei, Se, Te—"Come to ponder on virtue."

These American friends lived near enough to the workmen's quarter to have been involved in danger when Japanese guns were suddenly trained on the Chinese city and bombarded it for some ten days. They took me to see the industrial centre where scores of women were enabled to earn rice for their families during the weeks when the gunfire prevented the men from going to their regular work. The deft movements of their hands daintily embroidering handkerchiefs delighted us, but the faces told a story of suffering, patience, and determination. They reminded me of the women of Bow. If once more the Japanese soldiers were ordered to fire without warning on the Chinese quarter of this city, my place would surely be with these women. Remembering the Peace Army, I wrote to Mr. Amau in Tokyo to tell him what I had seen and what I would have to do, should the circumstance arise. Throughout the programs of meetings arranged for me by the Chinese Fellowship of Reconciliation, I made a point of prefacing my address with an apology for the evil that my ancestors had done to theirs by the opium wars.

I found Peiping to be the city of one's dreams. I stayed at Yenching University, entertained by a Chinese hostess. Two of the professors, Dr. Chao and Dr. P. C. Hsu, introduced me to the Summer Palace. We roamed about together, meandered, stood staring, talked a little, quoted poetry, climbed a fairy staircase, gazed down into deserted and incredibly alluring courtyards, sat by the Empress's barge, discussed mysticism, found a shrubbery that reminded two of us of London in springtime, found we all three agreed about prayer. It was a completely satisfying morning.

At Cheloo University, Tsinan, I came to know Luella Miner and found she fitted into my gallery of wise women. It holds about six people. Each is marked by resourcefulness, steadfast temper, wide in-

terests; they are people who can look at things objectively, who are rooted and grounded in God. When one dies, I don't search for her successor. She appears sooner or later. At present one of them is in India, one in the States, two in Bow, and two in other parts of England. Dr. Miner was over seventy and a lifelong friend of Feng Yu-Hsiang. This extraordinary man had already captured our imagination in Bow; a peasant turned soldier, then turned Christian as a result of watching the Christians go cheerfully to death in the Boxer rising; a great general adored by his men, a member of the Government; now in exile, living on the slopes of Taishan, a holy mountain famous in the days of Abraham, to which all China's great leaders make the pilgrimage sooner or later.

Dr. Miner sent him a message and he kindly invited us to visit him. We had to spend the night at the foot of the mountain. In pre-dawn darkness we climbed into chairs and were carried up its slopes. By the side of the steep stone path, pines climbed. When the sun shone, green and blue birds flew from branch to branch. Every now and then on the still air we heard shouts, snatches of song, or sharp words of command ringing out. Each bend of the narrow path disclosed some new scene, wild, romantic, secluded. This mountain fastness was well guarded by devoted troops protecting a lost leader. Suddenly we found ourselves confronted by five of them, holding their horses by the bridle, ready to leap into the saddle to give the alarm. Then they caught sight of the escort General Feng had sent us. We passed unchallenged.

His officers and men numbered a thousand. They were all vowed to the service of China. They must live in purity, without drinking, gambling, or smoking. They planted trees, raised vegetables and fruit, learned hygiene, made roads, studied. They had just built an exquisite temple shrine to commemorate the soldiers who had died for the Revolution.

Once more the path wound and ended at an old temple. We were shown into a little cold, stoveless reception-room. Fires were considered a luxury by this peasant general and therefore eschewed.

I thought I had never seen a face of such impressive mournfulness as Marshal Feng's. He is strong, tall, dressed like Tolstoi in a cotton

blouse. His honesty has been an embarrassment to friend and foe. His simple living shames other leaders. One who built himself a palatial residence found it annoying when a humble little cottage was erected on the adjoining site for his superior officer, Feng.

He had been so deeply hurt by the British shootings in Shanghai that his devotion to Christianity had collapsed. He could have forgiven the soldiers, for militarism is much the same the world over. But he found that his special friend among the missionaries, the man who had first brought him to know Christ, justified the bloodshed, declaring that it was necessary in order to prevent something worse. Feng Yu-Hsiang proceeded to cancel the Bible classes he had set up for his soldiers. He no longer encouraged them to be baptized. He asked me many questions, seemed interested, but his look of profound suffering was not once enlivened by a smile, until I told him about the Bow children and the Rosie Bishop incident.[1] He wanted me to tell him all I could about Gandhi. I proffered my usual request for forgiveness for my country's sins and began.

At Ting Hsien I saw something of Jimmy Yen's work, a centre for rural reconstruction to which people turn from all over the country. Most of his helpers seated round the supper table seemed to be Doctors of Philosophy. Some of the keenest minds of modern China have associated themselves with him, since the day he had his awakening. He told me how it happened. He was a student in one of the American universities, a Chinese Christian, holding fast to the old national traditions. The world war was raging. A Y.M.C.A. leader visited college to make a special appeal to Chinese students. What could that signify? War was undignified, a sign of immaturity. "Does a man take the best iron to make nails? Neither does one use good human material to make a soldier." So runs the Chinese proverb. However, the visitor should be heard. The speaker told them of the number of Chinese coolies labouring behind the lines, how they needed caring for, because they couldn't write or read letters; they were losing touch with home. They could not read newspapers to find out what was happening in their own country. The Y.M.C.A.

[1] See Chapter XI.

wanted to look after them and needed Chinese helpers. Would some of those present volunteer?

His request amazed them. What had they to do with coolies? Educated men had no such duties. Not one of them responded. But that night the matter lay heavy on Jimmy Yen's mind. He couldn't forget the challenge. Though he knew his first response was correct according to Chinese tradition, he tried hard to see the matter from the speaker's point of view. Gradually there dawned on him an almost revolutionary idea. Perhaps coolies should be considered as personalities. Perhaps they should be helped. In a day or two he had offered himself for service. Others followed.

In the midst of the innumerable jobs that awaited him in France, he found time to work out a simplified method of reading and writing Chinese. Out of the twenty odd thousand characters, he chose one thousand as a basis for simple stories, letters, and news articles. He prepared special literature and invited the coolies to attend classes. But to them it sounded like sheer madness to dream of writing. He persevered, however, until he collected eight or ten men bold enough to make the venture. After three weeks they could read a simple paragraph. To prove to incredulous outsiders that their accomplishment was real, Jimmy Yen pinned on the notice board a bit of news about China. A student strolled up and started reading it aloud to his mates. Hundreds gathered round, staring, amazed. The incident marked an epoch. The classes became huge. After the war, mass education became one of the great movements of China. In Chinese cities enthusiasts would sit at street corners and every passing workman would be stopped and taught one new character each day. The new textbooks spread everywhere. Literacy made it easier to set up co-operatives for buying, for credit, for well-sinking, for grain-selling. The great need was a centre for the nation-wide efforts at rural reconstruction. Ting Hsien provides this. Here agricultural research is carried on, short term schools are held, better seed and better-bred live stock can be produced. With the help of the enlightened local magistrate, administrative methods are worked out and taught. Doctors collaborate in improving rural hygiene.

From here I journeyed south to Hankow. Among a variety of ex-

periences, one stands out. Fellowship of Reconciliation members were holding a meeting in the bishop's house. Among their invited guests was a boy of twenty, Christopher Tang. He sat amazed as first the chairman and then I told of the spread of Christian pacifism round the world. It was like the Gates of Heaven opening to Christopher. He had never met or heard of a pacifist before. He had thought he was alone in his stand against militarism. As a schoolboy he had refused to walk in a certain procession because the violent spirit of its leaders clashed with what he had learned of Christ. The boys could not forgive him. They asked the headmaster to expel him. He refused, though not sharing Christopher's ideas. The boys thereupon left the school. It remained closed throughout the term. Christopher, the cause of its closing, was repeatedly threatened, assaulted. The persecutors were the first to grow tired. The school reopened. When he went on to college, military drill was obligatory, but he could not possibly practise killing. Again a lonely witness ensued. When the examination results were published, his degree though gained, was not granted. Having never met anyone who shared his views, the discovery of an international body such as the F. O. R. was like a blessing dropped down from heaven. Those who know Christopher best, his radiant humble spirit, and his unconquerable soul, prophesy that if ever China is to have its own Gandhi, Christopher may be he.

I sailed down the Yangtse-Kiang to Nanking. If only China had an adequate news service! If only the world's press were to drop the overworked words, "chaos" and "bandit" in its paragraphs about China! There is plenty of news of a different kidney to astonish the West; a network of rural reconstruction centres spreading from province to province; a new national health service; roads thrust through mountains; railway lines bringing into contact places that were a three weeks' journey apart; training-schools for magistrates and mayors, for doctors, nurses, midwives, and first-aid volunteers; national factories with good working conditions, producing cheaply what formerly had to be imported.

Foreigners told me of their adventures during the revolutionary rising. I saw where Pearl Buck was hidden by her coolie in his mud hut. I heard from the college staff at Ginling how during the

crisis the Chinese students took matters into their own hands, hid the European members in a locked room, then went out themselves to meet and cope with the soldiers, clamouring for the lives of all foreigners. I met the American missionary who stood watching a soldier shoot at her; as his rifle missed fire he slowly reloaded it, took aim again, and she fell. When the wound in her leg healed, her father said, "Surely you're not going back to the people who want you so little that they try to kill you!" Laughing, she answered, "Did you retire from the army after your first wound?"

Next I went into territory recently in the hands of bandits. I stayed with a woman who had refused to escape in the gunboat. She had been practising the presence of God so that she refused, on the evening the bandits were expected, to let anyone stay to protect her. Sitting alone, knitting, she heard the door thrown open, the heavy tramp of feet. A bandit held his pistol to her breast. With death so near, her sensibilities were quickened. She forced herself to look into his face. To her amazement, she felt no animosity, no resentment. He was young. She felt sorry for him. Death didn't seem to matter at all, scarcely existed. She gave him her ring. He turned away and left her unharmed. Life was never the same afterwards. "Time was coloured with the infinite, immeasurably enhanced."

Shanghai was the next city on my itinerary. I detested it. It seems to belong to altogether too many people. The coolies in other parts of China may be overworked and are certainly underpaid, but they live their own life with zest and humour. In Shanghai they run between the rickshaw shafts, anxious-looking, full of care. The traffic laws are strict; the Sikh policemen are big and burly foreigners, not at all unready to use their batons on arms or shoulders of thinly clad coolies who have to pull up with a tremendous jerk when a traffic signal is suddenly reversed and they perhaps encroach an inch beyond the allotted mark. The asphalted streets are painful to bare feet, especially when the sun is hot. I saw one man pushing a wheelbarrow on which six women sat. His face was bathed in sweat. But it is not the physical labour and strain which distress one most. It's their expression—the same look which one sees on the face of Indian coolies; the result of an attempt to carry on with their old ways under a

system that demands ruthless efficiency, punctuality, soulless routine. It is not a good sight to see six Chinese coolies harnessed like horses to a heavy-laden cart, dragging it up from the riverside, along a steeply inclined narrow alley, suddenly halted to let a car dash by.

I went into a cotton mill, by no means one of the worst. The children worked twelve-hour shifts, day or night. On night work, the shift was lengthened to sixteen hours every Friday. Some of the girls were ten years old. Worse than the weariness is the required sense of repressing one's natural instincts for joy, for leisureliness, for spontaneity. Everything is forced, hurried, rushed. It is in the small hours round about 2 A.M. that most of the accidents occur. Some of these mill girls have developed into grand characters. So eager are they to remove the stigma of illiteracy from their country and to fit her to stand up to the Japanese that after a night shift they attend classes arranged by the Y.W.C.A. at nine o'clock in the morning. When they have learned to read and write, they volunteer to teach others at the same hour.

A young Chinese scholar took me to see the devastated area of Shanghai. We approached through the Municipal Park. The skyline grew jagged. Ruins of great business buildings stretched in both directions. We stood in the salvaged garden of what had been his house. "This woke me up," he said, reminiscently. "I was living for myself alone. I had almost forgotten God. I did nothing for others." He took me to a narrow passage near by which leads to the broad thoroughfare. "After my house crashed, I spent many hours here, watching the fighting. I knew it wasn't the fault of the Japanese soldiers. I could see they didn't want to kill our people. One soldier shuddered when ordered to bayonet a man. I saw some refuse to obey."

On the way back, I saw a squad of men drilling in the Park, Japanese soldiers still. A passion of hate surged up in me. I didn't want to express it, but I had to say something to this man walking quietly beside me, gazing at the destroyers of his home. I reminded myself of British militarism throughout the East for which our own profoundly peace-loving people are unconsciously responsible. I managed

to blurt out: "Perhaps, after all, those Japanese soldiers drilling over there would much rather be at home, working in their fields."

Serenely my companion looked round, surprised at the queer forced tone of my voice. "Why, of course they would," he replied. "I know that very well."

News spread through China of the revolution in Fukien. As Foochow was my next port of call, I arrived a day or two before the famous Nineteenth Route Army. Sandbags cluttered up the streets. School girls and boys were peregrinating the city, under orders to make speeches; they were not sure what about. New laws were promulgated that no public servant was to wear silk or draw a salary of more than 200 dollars per month. The new Minister of Education, to whom I had an introduction, was wearing a cotton coat of Chinese blue with deep reveres and large buttons, a delightful young man. The Foreign Secretary was Eugene Chen. His office had just been bombed. The ceiling of half the reception-room was hidden by an enormous white dust sheet. Eugene Chen had done much to rid Hankow of foreign domination a year or two previously. We talked about the Peace Army. When he realized I had been Gandhi's hostess in London, he jumped up and shook hands all over again, saying, "When I read in the papers that an English lady was entertaining Gandhi in East London I said to myself, 'That may save the British connection with India.' "

The pines around Foochow remain always in my memory. They seem to grow singly and crooked, at odd corners of the road. According to their whim, they accompany the long steep winding stone path which climbs Mount Kaishan. They are quite self-sufficient, individualist. They do not favour growing in clumps or in a line. They guard graves, or supply shade for a stone seat, or stretch out their arms to welcome the solitary traveller.

While staying at Fukien Christian College, I heard that it was on their premises that a completely new epoch for coolies had been recently inaugurated. A student came in late for dinner, found it all finished, marched into the kitchen, saw the coolie eating his, ordered him at once to set about preparing him food. The coolie said, "I will

as soon as I've finished." The student struck him on the cheek and made him start there and then. The coolie, after serving the dinner, went straight to the president's office and lodged his complaint. He declared that being struck by a student had injured his personality because, being of a lower station, he was unable to hit back. This was probably the first time in Chinese history that a coolie had claimed a personality. The president passed on the case to the whole body of students. After careful deliberation they decided that the student must write a letter of apology and that this letter must be pinned up in the dining-room. This saved the coolie's face. But the student's face also had to be saved. This was accomplished by getting him write his letter in English, a language that neither the coolie nor any of his friends could read. Both were now satisfied. The coolie used to bring whole strings of relatives to look at it.

Hongkong meant just one thing to me, Mui Tsai—child slaves. As far back as 1922 I had heard of Mrs. Haslewood and her husband, a lieutenant-commander in the Royal Navy, stationed at Hongkong. I read in the daily press that as soon as they arrived, Mrs. Haslewood became interested in the plight of these little girls, called "adopted daughters." A nice name does not lessen pain, however. These children are sold by their parents, sometimes for a few shillings when times are bad. They have hard work heaped upon them by their mistresses, until at the age of fifteen or sixteen they become profitable in the marriage market. One became the ninth wife of a rich old man. Mrs. Haslewood began to collect facts as to the legality of ownership. She was warned by local people not to stir up trouble for herself by objecting to an old-established Chinese custom. She would not thus be threatened and continued her quiet work. She made extensive inquiries and called for action to be taken. Soon another warning came that her husband would be relieved of his command in this area unless she desisted. But he refused to allow her to give up her work for the sake of his position. They both believed it was God's work she was doing. After a month or so, in view of official pressure brought to bear on them, they decided to leave Hongkong. Ever since that day they have devoted themselves to working

for the removal of child slavery.[1] The children in Bow had been doing little things to help on the Haslewood's work for so long a time that they wanted me to bring home a first-hand description of any rescued children I saw. The look on the face of one child never fades from my mind.

It is difficult to put an end to this chapter. The Far East is too attractive. It must close with a picture of Singapore. I stayed one night there in order to have first-hand news to take back to Sybil Thorndyke of her son, whose ship was stationed there. I slept in a tiny bungalow at the end of a jetty thrust out from a grassy garden of palms. The water lapped just below the floor of my bedroom. In the middle of the night I waked up for joy. I sat by the window in the cool air. The moon made a path from me to the horizon. The palms lazily dropped a coco-nut now and then.

[1] For further particulars see their book *Child Slavery in Hongkong. The Mui Tsai Question.* Published by the Sheldon Press. S.P.C.K.

CHAPTER XXI

With Gandhi's Flying Squad

WE ARRIVED in India early in 1934, intending to spend a month renewing old friendships, doing no work, enjoying ourselves. Our arrangement with Gandhiji was to join him wherever he happened to be in his whirlwind tour of India. He had been set free from prison six or eight months before his sentence expired, on condition that he did no political work during the remitted term. He was delighted with the opportunity of throwing himself into a nation-wide campaign on behalf of the Untouchables.

These unhappy people, numbering some seventy million, are of a different race from the Hindus. They are the descendants of the aborigines whom the Hindu invaders displaced. They are outside the four castes which comprise Hindu society. If their shadow falls on a Brahmin's food, he must discard it, even if none other is procurable. They do all the dirtiest labour, scavenging, latrine-cleaning, removal of carcasses. A stage below the Untouchables come the Unseeables. These must not come out of their houses except in the dark.

It is easy to explode in righteous indignation over this age-old evil, but it is wiser to listen to the Hindu explaining how such a situation arose. He confesses it is an ugly blot on their society which thousands of them are honestly trying to remove, but he points out that in other lands, victorious invaders have put to the sword the original inhabitants, or enslaved them, or started a process of spiritual erosion, such as dispossessing them of their hunting-grounds. In such cases tribal traditions wilt, self-government falters, village sanctions cease to function, and the vigorous, self-confident primitives lose their spirit and eat their heart out in a long process of degeneration. The Hindu explains further that his refusal to eat or drink with the aborigines is the natural result of their custom of eating carrion. Their teeth decay; their bodies smell; they do not take the daily bath nor spend the

regulation seven minutes a day cleaning their teeth; they wash neither hands nor mouth before or after a meal.

Many of Gandhiji's followers had been devoting their lives to the service of the Untouchables in various parts of the country for some fifteen years. These centres were now to be visited and it was hoped new ones were to be founded. On the eve of setting out on this tour, Gandhiji brought a new name into fashion. No longer were they to be called "Untouchables." They were "Harijans," the beloved of God.

The usual welcome was awaiting us in Khaitan House, Calcutta, the huge family headquarters of seven brothers, business and professional men, noted for their catholic hospitality. "Why did you telegraph, sister, inquiring if you could come?" one of the brothers asked me in 1926. "What would please us best would be to come home from business and see you happily settled in your own room."

Mr. Khaitan handed me during tea a telegram from Gandhiji, telling him to speed me to Madras at once. The journey took two nights and a day. It was an early hour of the second morning when his secretary boarded the train. I had forgotten the courteous Indian habit of travelling the last lap of the journey with one's guest. From the station we were driven straight to the prison where the Brahmin leader of the south, Rajagopalachari, had been lying for many months. His release was due. This outstanding Hindu had given up a brilliant legal career to become one of Gandhi's most faithful followers. He had been only a name to me until he stepped out of prison and into our car. For the next hour, as we drove to Gandhiji's meeting-place, I gleaned much from his conversation.

Arrived at last, we found thousands of country people squatting on the ground in the blazing sunshine, eyes fixed on the high platform erected for Gandhiji. The approach thereto was guarded by scores of khaddar-clothed volunteers. The long flight of improvised steps was covered with home-woven cloth dyed in the nationalist colours. Young banana trees had been cut down for decorations. We all shared the excited sense of expectancy. Cheering burst out before we could see Gandhiji. Then he appeared, striding along, looking as though he were enjoying everything immensely. Up the stairs he came, speedy and straight as usual, greeted his dear friend Rajaji, spoke

friendly words to the new guest, Dorothy, gave me a laughing reminiscent welcome, and settled down on the floor just in front of us. Before he started his speech he rapped out, as I had vowed to my niece that he would, "What's the matter with your thumb?" There's nothing that Gandhiji's eagle eye misses, not even a diminutive bandage protecting a slightly torn nail.

He talked for half an hour, then ended his speech with a request for jewelry and other gifts to be sold for the benefit of Harijans, to set up schools, to dig wells, to start more industrial training centres. For fifteen or twenty minutes a stream of people climbed the steps, took off their silver ornaments, and handed them to him. There was a thoroughly jolly atmosphere during the whole process. We had to help in the arduous task of proffering collection-bags to the audience. It's a difficult job when people are sitting so close to each other that actually there isn't room to put a foot between them. Even if they manage to squeeze out a space for one step, the next step is problematic. The poorest woman would untie the corner of her *sari* and bring out a minute coin, a pie, one-sixth of a cent.

Next, Gandhiji turned himself into an auctioneer. He prides himself on being a good business man, as one of his caste, the third, should be. The Hindu equivalent of 'going, going, gone,' rang in one's ears. He seemed able to sell anything. One gift, a silk handkerchief, he refused to auction because it was made in Macclesfield. It ought not to have been bought by a self-respecting Indian, according to the strict discipline of the Congress. "Buy Swadeshi"[1] is a more potent weapon than the English voter realizes. He would be more careful how the Indian situation was handled if he had watched Indians shopping. If the article they want isn't obtainable in Swadeshi, they inquire if it is in stock made in Japan, or in Germany, or in America. If only a British-made article is available, they leave the shop. He gave me the Macclesfield silk handkerchief, and Dorothy another gift which we assured him he had no right to sell. It was a highly coloured picture of himself and King George shaking hands with each other, both wearing a broad and rather inept grin. The artist had plentifully adorned Gandhiji's famous white Kashmir shawl

[1] Home productions, hence made in India.

with silver sequins. Another present fell to my lot, I think because of the educational value it might have on English voters. It was a necklace made in prison by one of the civil disobedience noncoöperators. A tragic thing to ponder over, giving a tangible example of the waste of time, effort, and personality in a score of Indian jails. The unknown craftsman had taken the short hairs off a coco-nut, plaited them meticulously, made dozens of tiny links out of them, and arranged them into an orderly design which might be accepted as a substitute for beauty.

Every imaginable sort of gift proved grist to Gandhiji's mill; even, on one occasion, a beautiful young deer. This sort of meeting would be held many times a day and the campaign continued month after month. Sometimes a day would include seven meetings, a two hours' drive through the countryside, a third-class train journey at night which encroached on the early hours of the next day. A meticulous account was kept of all collections and takings. Day and night the money poured in. Wherever the train stopped, the platform would be one solid mass of humanity waiting to see Mahatmaji. And Mahatmaji would put his hand out of the window and say, "Give, give!" The clerks responsible for keeping the accounts would sit up half the night sometimes, chasing a missing cent. Gandhiji insists on exactitude.

"Can you stand the pace?" he asked us the first day.

"Of course," we answered, without thinking.

"Not many can. Most of them stay with me a couple of weeks and then go off for a rest, returning later when the others retire for the same reason."

"We English are very strong," we boasted.

"All right. Avoid eating starch and you'll keep your energy as I keep mine."

That did not suit our tastes, however. Only for a week did we mortify the flesh and take fruit, vegetables, and milk according to his instructions. Then we struck dieting, and started the day properly again with tea and toast. We rarely were in the same place for breakfast and dinner. Only two consecutive nights of each week did we sleep in the same place.

In the super-orthodox areas, we were met by black flags and the slogan, "Go back, Gandhi!" Sometimes there was worse trouble. A fanatical Sanatanist[1] threw himself on the ground in front of Gandhiji's car. One night such a violent demonstration had been staged that the back window of the car was broken and fell in. He believed it would have meant serious injury or even death if, as was customary, a companion had been with him. He spent much of the night pondering on Satyagraha.[2] He came to the conclusion that men would attack him in a car who wouldn't attack him in person, the car being conceived almost unconsciously as a sort of weapon of defence. Thereupon he refused to use it. He would walk to the meeting that day. Sure enough, when he and the oldest of his helpers, Thakkar Bapa of the Servants of India Society, set out, staff in hand, on the four-mile walk, there was a quietness that could be felt among the multitude. The Sanatanists who had trained themselves to march, to shout slogans, to interrupt at a given signal, fell silent. They lost power even to inconvenience the two humble-looking men.

We were not free from crowds even in remote country areas where no villages were within sight. The cars were held up by a company of peasants in the road, barring our passage. Their villages were anything from ten to twenty miles distant, but hearing that their leader was passing that way, the walk was negligible compared with the honour of seeing him. The Hindu believes that the mere sight of a Mahatma[3] gives one a blessing, almost automatically, so it was with hands folded in the attitude of prayer and with eyes downcast as is fitting before a man of God, that the people awaited his passing. Rather tantalizing for them, one imagines, not to be able to take their fill of staring and admiring; risky, too, in case he is gone when their bowed head is raised again. Over and over again I watched their changing expressions, from anxiety lest the car did not slow down sufficiently to see him, to awed stillness; then to delight, an eager gaze all the more satisfying because of their religious preparation for it. Some twenty thousand people each day had their desire fulfilled of

[1] Ancient, hence orthodox.
[2] Soul force, the power of truth and goodwill.
[3] A great spirit, hence saint.

looking at Gandhiji. No wonder the Indian friends rejoiced in this campaign. For us two British there was always a heavy burden to bear. Many of our companions were ex-prisoners. We asked for categorical accounts of penal treatment. They made light of them to spare us. We insisted. We heard about the iron instrument fastened to the legs, a veritable torture; the heavy chains round the ankles; the lice in the wall of one prison which induced typhoid fever in a highborn and delicately nurtured girl; the custom of making women political prisoners share sanitary conveniences with syphilitic prostitutes. I knew a little about prisons in England and how easy it is for punishments to be inflicted that no magistrate has ordered. I had been in an Indian prison where no political prisoners complicated matters. That had seemed to me horrible enough; clean, of course, and serving good food, but working spiritual havoc on its inmates. As visitors were shown round, each prisoner had to stand up and hold out for our inspection the record of his crimes. There was a row of cells open at the front except for iron bars, rather like the lion house at the Zoo. Only one of them was occupied. A fourteen-year-old boy of bright and candid countenance stood behind the bars, holding up a sheet on which it was recorded that he had taken a few shillings' worth of jute. A woman with a baby in her arms in like manner was made to acquaint us with the fact that she had murdered her husband.

After dinner one day I read a letter from Bengal. It reported that the previous week a magistrate had visited a near-by village and insisted on the inhabitants coming out of their houses to salute the Union Jack. As Congressmen, of course, cannot do that, trouble ensued. Inquiries should have been made, but no one was allowed to enter the disturbed area. "Perhaps they'd let a British person go. Shall I try?" I asked Gandhiji.

"You could ask Sir John Anderson's[1] permission," he answered.

The necessary telegrams were dispatched to Calcutta, while I jealously counted up the few days remaining before my ship sailed for Europe. I had promised to be home by Easter; nine months was a long enough spell of absence from Kingsley Hall. The responsibilities

[1] Governor of Bengal.

on my young deputies was heavy. I would just have time to get to Calcutta and back before setting out for Ceylon and boarding the boat at Colombo.

But it didn't turn out that way at all. The talk with Sir John proved too interesting, and too useful. It opened the way to many other interviews and much message-carrying. At first I worked determinedly at the jigsaw puzzle of fitting all duties into seven days, but little by little something Doris had said to me as we parted in London, assumed great significance. I had taken almost no notice of it at the time, because the idea was so alien to all my desires and plans. She had repeated several times, with emphasis, "Don't forget, if you find something you ought to do for India, you must stay on and do it."

I returned to Gandhiji. He seemed pleased with my mission. I wired to the Viceroy on my own account, asking for an interview. The reply was to be sent to Colombo. If unfavourable, I could embark forthwith and get back to work at home. If an interview were arranged, I would have to start on a five days' journey to Delhi and one thing would be sure to lead to many others. I would probably be in India for months.

It is a horrid journey from Madras down to the tipmost point of India. And I don't know any more desolate spot than where the train stops and the boat starts, except the place in Ceylon where the boat stops and the train starts. That is definitely worse because the train doesn't want to start. It seems to cleave to the smelly jetty. One walks up and down it for nearly two hours; it is scarcely surprising that no one has ever had the heart to set up a tearoom here, or a bar, or a counter for chocolates and minerals, or even a waiting-room. One stands about disconsolately. At one point, Dorothy and I decided to forget where we were. We strode off the jetty and down on to a triangle of sandy beach. Depressed though it looked, at any rate, sea water washed its lower edge. It should wash our feet at the same time. We kicked off our shoes and stockings and started to—scream, to hop, to leap into our shoes again and rush back to the jetty. The beach was not covered with sand, but with large sand-coloured crabs that only came to life when we invaded their territory.

The customs men had condemned the great basketful of fruit we

had cannily brought with us for supper. Ceylon apparently was afraid of a blight on its orange crop. The meal served on the train fitted the income of Indian Civil Service officials, perhaps, but we couldn't afford it. So we pretended we were satisfied with our biscuits and the odd bit of fruit we had salvaged when the blight experts weren't behaving too expertly.

The railway track to Colombo runs through the jungle for hours. We waked at midnight to find the train stationary, silent, moonlit, invaded by the cries of beasts. I leaned out of the window, but hastily drew back and pulled it up with a thump. The creature just below me with eyes like yellow lamps looked strong enough to leap into our carriage.

Mixed up with heat, discomfort, hunger, and guessing what Lord Willingdon's cable would be, was the slow development of an amazing new idea. If I stayed out in India I'd probably better retire from my leadership of Kingsley Hall. To return at Easter to take up my old duties had been a fixed star on my horizon. When a fixed star threatens to move, one's calculations seem scarcely worth bothering over. One thing I was clear about; I could not let the load of responsibility for Kingsley Hall lie on deputies longer than for the appointed nine months. I had intended to resign at some subsequent and not far distant date. Perhaps it would be better to cable to the trustees at once, that they might settle both problems at once, the immediate task due to the state of affairs in India, and that which was inevitably approaching, the appointment of my successor.

We drove from Colombo to the home of Mr. Ediriwara, our old helpmate in scrubbing, polishing, and other Kingsley Hall work, now the head of an interesting Buddhist school in Moratuwa. The viceregal cable awaited us saying, "Come." I sat on the bed for hours facing the break-up of the whole pattern of my life. As I pondered, I seemed to be outside it all in some queer way. I remember how a centipede rushing across the floor made me shiver. Yet it may not have been the centipede.

I pondered every aspect of the situation for the best part of two days. Then I dispatched a cable to the trustees, airmail letters to Doris, Ben Platten, and my dear and faithful deputies.

The very air I breathed seemed different. Up till now everything I saw or heard or thought fitted into some aspect of Kingsley Hall, its past, present, or future. This was an extraordinary new world I had entered. Kingsley Hall and I were no longer one.

For three days I fulfilled my engagements in Colombo and then began the trek back to Delhi. On the fourth day we had a large compartment to ourselves. There were five windows on each side, all open. My black felt hat perched as usual on a peg. Suddenly it levitated and floated out of the window. My Delhi hostess, Mrs. Devadas Gandhi, possessed no hat. It was Sunday. The shops were shut. I knew only one missionary, and called on her. She was out but her colleague kindly lent me hers. Thus fortified, I had my talk with the Viceroy.

Back and forth between Britain and India went the various rumours. "Gandhi is a spent force." That was wishful thinking, obviously. "The money collected on the Harijan tour is being spent on political work." "Gifts are not acknowledged." "No audited accounts are published." As I was considerably bored each week with the long columns of figures published in Harijan,[1] and as one of the leading business men in Calcutta, India's representative at the International Labour Office in Geneva, was the treasurer of the fund, it seemed to me singularly unintelligent of my fellow countrymen to choose that particular stick to beat the Gandhi people with. My co-religionists worried me, too. As there were so many missionaries of various nationalities in every place we stopped at, why didn't some of them join in the public rejoicings that at long last Hindus were convicted of the sin of untouchability and were trying to get rid of it? Or, if they had been conditioned to smell politics in every popular movement, why weren't they interested in turning up with the crowd for seven-o'clock prayers? Evening after evening a thousand or so citizens would come together to sit in silence while some one sang chants, hymns, prayers. If joining in these devotions seemed to them indecorous, at any rate let them call and have a friendly talk with this super-accessible, super-friendly person. But no. They mostly preserved an aloof attitude.

My niece had to go home, but Agatha Harrison arrived and we

[1] The weekly paper published by Gandhiji in Hindi and English.

shared numerous tea-trays as well as other things. As we entered one city I noticed the boys in the playing-fields of a missionary school. I was imagining their delight at the prospect of seeing and hearing Gandhiji. Their school had lent its playground to him for meetings on his last visit some years previously. An hour or two later a letter was handed to us to read. It had just been received from these same school authorities, saying they could not accede to the request for the use of their playground for the meeting. Agatha and I gazed at each other, almost in despair. Was it any good going on, trying to build bridges? Our own people seemed bent on defeating efforts for peace in India. But this was our job. We must act. We set out. It was a glaring hot day. Agatha had a painfully damaged foot. We first found the signatory of the letter, an Indian secretary, almost as dispirited by its contents as ourselves. We inquired who had chaired the meeting at which the decision was taken. He directed us a mile or so farther on, where we found the mission compound and the Indian headmaster. He referred us to the Englishman responsible. He was in a conference. We rested in his cool house for a time. What should we say to awaken him to the value of the opportunity he had summarily thrown away? When he arrived we found the poor man as much a victim of circumstances as the rest of the protagonists in India. The imperial machine is the very slaughter-house of initiative and spontaneity, even though goodwill may retain its integrity. The clergyman greeted us with pleasure. It seems that he felt as we did about the playground's aptitude as a meeting-place, but he was only a deputy for the real man in charge, who was on furlough and who never looked with friendly eye on Gandhiji's doings. In honour, he had to act, not as a free agent, but as a deputy. Our visit gained something, however. He and five other tall British clergy turned up that evening to call on Gandhiji. They sat on the roof with him and he enjoyed their visit greatly, even though they came in the middle of his supper, and when they departed the sun had set, so he could eat no more.

India is a good laboratory for research work on the effect of bitterness and cynicism on physical health. Some people looked posi-

tively ill, poisoned, as though the springs of joy and of hope were completely dried up.

They vowed that sex nastiness imported direct from Hollywood was our fault. I pointed out that people in England and America were as disgusted with it as they were; there was, however, plenty one could do about it. A black list was set up in the States. A campaign for decency had been launched by the Christian Church. I found that the same daily paper that blamed the British for everything published a full-page article written by a film star, a disgusting article giving immoral advice. There was much else to keep one fairly unpopular with embittered people on both sides, until one became sick to death of all cynicism, the most idiotically naïve person seeming preferable to the sophisticated type. But how if that very person, the self-pitying, disillusioned one, is our own particular British product in India, and therefore it's our job to stand by him, clamped with hoops of steely duty?

After a time our program took us to devastated Bihar. One of the worst recorded earthquakes had just occurred, covering many millions of acres with sand thrown up from far below the surface. The area affected was as big as Wales. A fissure remained in the earth's surface two hundred feet long, thirty feet across, and twenty feet deep, sufficiently broad at the bottom to permit four elephants to walk abreast. It was piteous to see the bewilderment, the homelessness, the hunger. The sand lay over the fields to the height of three feet. I can never forget a farmer I saw, trying to drive his plough through the sand deep enough to get to the good earth and finding the effort fruitless.

We stayed in Patna at the headquarters of the relief work undertaken by the Congress party. The house was cracked but still habitable. Here Pierre Ceresole arrived, bringing new hope with him. Ever since his imprisonment in war days for the refusal of conscript duty, he had continued the attempt to set up a new sort of service, voluntary, international, recruited to save life, not to destroy it. Year by year, F. O. R. people had supported with the strength of their arms or monetary contributions pieces of work that he undertook; in one of the devastated French towns, in Lichenstein where an avalanche had

destroyed the means of transit, in distressed areas in Wales among our unemployed miners, etc. It was beginning to be recognized as a moral equivalent for war such as William James desired. C. F. Andrews, ex-missionary and India's most faithful friend in Britain, asked Pierre if he could not set up a unit of this International Voluntary Service in India. As an engineer he would be useful in the immense operations that had to be undertaken before the June rains came to swell the river, already changing its bed as a result of the earthquake. They expected many villages to be submerged. He would be welcomed, it was hoped, by British officials as well as by Gandhiji and all the Congress people.

Pierre and an Englishman who had shouldered many a heavy task with him before worked side by side with the dispirited peasants, evoking a new mutual confidence. This work is still continuing.[1] The fact that the most creative result of the European Non-Violence Movement has now taken root in Asia has already stirred the imagination of Japanese and Chinese to endeavour to institute a similar service of unquenchable good-will.

I fell out of the running. Gandhiji's unheeded warning was justified. I cooled off too precipitately one evening after a day of heat. Every part of me seemed to go wrong. I had to stay in bed when they set out on the next tour. Lots of nice young Indian doctors came and prescribed, but I knew Gandhiji's method was best—fast, fast, fast. At last I was able to move. I went to an ashram near Calcutta for Easter. It wasn't a nice Easter. Only one person, the superintendent, could speak English, and he, though very kind, had two or three hundred men to keep at work as well as a body of helpers to train. My room was a little shed. Every two hours a cup of milk, a glass of orange juice, or a glass of tomato juice was brought to me. The steamy heat at all hours of the day and night encouraged every sort of insect. A spider of intimidating girth lodged in the crack of the rough-boarded door which separated my bath shed from the rest of the sheds. When a centipede fell out of my wall, I told the superintendent, gently, so as not to appear to grumble. Unmoved, he answered, "Of course, sister, this Ashram is bounded on three sides

[1] May, 1937.

by the jungle. The creatures naturally come through our place. It is their short cut. But have no fear. They do not hurt us. They know we are non-violent people." I smiled feebly, knowing I was not, and certain that they knew it, too.

At the end of a week's rest, I went to Calcutta to keep some engagements. I had seen Jahawarlal Nehru in London, corresponded with him, followed his development closely and with great appreciation. I was now allowed to visit him in jail. I had an hour with him. One thing he said stands out clearly. "Hornets kept flying into my cell. I killed them. More came. For weeks they worried me. Then I decided to change my tactics; to practise Satyagraha. I proclaimed an armistice. I would kill no more, and they must keep to their side of the cell by the window. Both sides have faithfully adhered to the pact."

Staying in the homes of Hindu families, I came to know the mother's point of view about Britain and India. It was more worrying than any other. The Bengal ordinances are such that if one boy or girl stands out from the rest of the family as the brightest, the most generous-hearted, or with a specially strong sense of duty, that one must be carefully watched by the mother. If there is any sign that he is developing in public spirit, it would probably be best sternly to send him away, to Europe, perhaps, at any rate, safely outside Bengal. Parents are required in Bengal to turn informers against their own children. They must tell the magistrate if they have any reason to think their boy or girl is becoming interested in subversive doctrines, and most patriotism in India is anti-British. The magistrate then takes steps, whatever steps he thinks wise. Magistrates and parents do not often see eye to eye with each other as to the best next steps. If the mother decides not to tell the magistrate what she fears about her child, she must not let her husband know what is worrying her. He would probably forfeit his job. So mothers grow anxious watching their children. It is not a good sign in the body politic when mothers as a class are afraid.

"Have you told Sir John this?" was my regular formula.

"What's the good?" the mother would ask.

"He's a fine character. He'd want to know. I bet he doesn't realize," I urged.

"Of course he doesn't. But if he did, he could do nothing. It's all part of the system," was the usual retort.

"He could make representations to the Government. Tell him, do," I said.

"You tell him. I wouldn't ask for an interview. It's our policy to ask for no favour from your people."

So the rôle of messenger reached another stage.

Dr. Tagore was sitting under a spreading tree, white with blossom, when I visited him at Santiniketan and took up this matter with him. He said he had decided he could not obey the ordinances. If one of his students came to him for advice and revealed a desire to work for the complete independence of India, he should certainly not report it to the magistrate, but would advise him as had always been his wont.

"Tell Sir John," I adjured him.

"It would be better if you did," he answered.

On the other hand, I found British leaders and officials who had sincerely wanted to meet Mr. Gandhi, tried to get in touch with him in order to come to a common understanding, but somehow their letters had been left unanswered, or on arrival they had been given no opportunity of talking with him alone, or in some other way a hitch had occurred. Must there always be a hitch in Indian affairs? It certainly is damping to the spirits of a normal British person to spend much time on an article, a letter, or on preparing a propaganda meeting in London with representatives of all the important newspapers present, and then to find one's Indian colleague loses the post or the letter, or turns up without the necessary paragraphs to hand to the pressmen so arduously assembled.

One afternoon the president elect of Congress asked if I'd care to go with him and an Indian woman teacher to see a mutual friend, Verrier Elwin, who lived so far away in the jungle that visitors were almost unknown. Of course I accepted delightedly. He had to do a few Congress meetings en route. We stayed in Jawaharlal Nehru's house in Allahabad, rowed up the Ganges to where it met and mingled

with the Jamna and took the train at night. To travel with a Congress president is to be well cared for. A large part of the platform where we changed trains was covered with a carpet provided with cushions. Here I slumbered while Congress committees were held at the outlying corner of reserved space. Next night there was a period of six hours to be spent between trains. Cool-looking white beds complete with mosquito nets were set out in a row down the street for us. Sometimes three beds stretched along the railway platform. Sometimes it was more casual: We were driving by car; the darkness fell; "Why not rest here?" said somebody; the car stopped; the bedding rolls were thrown out; as all Hindu ablutions take place by daylight, I had to try to forget my customary habits. We lay down until the sun rose; then we drove fast, longing for breakfast and the bath. One morning my bath was in a stable in the stall next to a donkey. A rat disappeared from it as I entered; a friendly robin kept an eye cocked as though to give me warning should he return.

In a remote village one of Gandhiji's best followers had been hard at work for five years, rehabilitating homes and getting families out of debt by the revival of indigenous hand industries. He had ten villages under his care. I knew he never gave himself a holiday. The equivalent of Sunday seems lacking in Hinduism. I wanted to present him with something from the outside world. All I had was a handful of shrivelled apples. I offered them, feeling apologetic. His answer stays with me always. "No, thank you, sister. I never eat anything that is not produced in one of our ten villages."

Our eventual arrival in the jungle created a stir that Verrier Elwin vowed would be enshrined in the folklore of the forest people. It was the country of the Gonds, the lineal descendants of Kipling's Mowgli, affectionate, humour-loving, cheery folk. One of their chief joys was dancing.

"Would they do it for us?" we asked.

"That depends," answered Verrier. "There's a good deal of smallpox about. The smallpox goddess might think they were treating her too light-heartedly if they danced again so soon. They were at it last night, you see."

After dinner he consulted Panda Bapa, the witch doctor. When

Verrier first settled here years previously this man worked against him all the time. The result was that he made little progress with his schools, although he eschewed all spoken propaganda for Christianity. Then he bethought him to make Panda Bapa inspector of schools. His illiteracy didn't seem to matter. Henceforth, all went well.

On hearing of our desire to see the dancing, Panda Bapa killed a chicken, observed signs, named the following night as propitious, and arranged for communal dancing on the hill by the holy lake. It was all done discreetly. No one wanted to disturb the goddess.

Next day, just before sundown, we set out on the five-mile tramp. It was moonlight when we reached the sacred lake. After a swim, we had a picnic supper, rolled ourselves in blankets, and slept. I awoke to the sound of gentle Gond voices and the steady beat of the tomtom. They were singing one of their endless stories about a bird on a bush and a woman coming out of a house and the things she carried in her hand and what she gathered in the garden and how she returned to the house. Their songs go on indefinitely.

Long after we had gone to sleep again, these friendly Gonds continued to dance merely for joy. Panda Bapa accompanied us home after breakfast. He helped me carry my things. I'd been presented with a jungle fiddle, bow and arrows—poisoned ones—and a leopard skin to say my prayers on when I got back to London. He was very helpful, but I shall never forget his look when I stumbled on the long rough journey, clutched his arm, and held on to it hard till I had righted myself. His expression was one of unnamable horror. After we had left, Verrier sent us news. The Gonds were convinced that I was Verrier's wife, that I had come to persuade him to leave them, that on his refusal I had left him and run away with the big rich business man.

In June I was back with Gandhiji in Bombay. Here I met the Captain Sisters and heard about their special company of a thousand Bombay women who wore their *khaddar saris* dyed a glorious flaming scarlet to betoken utmost sacrifice. They had put themselves completely at the disposal of the country, ready to do, dare, or die in any duty Gandhiji entrusted to them. On his arrival from England in

1932, these flaming *saris* had lined the streets all the way from the wharf to his headquarters in the city.

It was the 15th of June when we set sail for Europe. The monsoon was due. It did not fail us. We had the most loathsome voyage home. A Bow friend met me, as unheralded I reached Kingsley Hall door. "Why, Muriel!" he said. "You've shrunk!"

CHAPTER XXII

Soviet Interlude

IT WAS necessarily a strange experience coming home to Bow, but not to Kingsley Hall. I had schooled my spirit, so I thought, to be a model ex-leader. It had always seemed to me a little obvious, almost vulgar, to involve oneself in the mother-in-law type of maladjustment. It would be superlatively naïve to clutch at the reins of office after handing them over to another. I was free of responsibility for Kingsley Hall except for sharing the trusteeship with seven others. I could now be an ordinary member and enjoy everything. Then why feel such anguish if the lights wanted cleaning? if the chalk marks were left on the outer wall? if the spacious empty restfulness of the Place of Worship were sullied by an extra piano stuck in one of its corners? How persistently we human beings torture ourselves!

Doris had been appointed my successor and was doing a fine piece of work in the Hall. Much of what I had neglected she was already developing. I was completely and profoundly grateful. She put at my disposal her own newly furnished room in 23 Raverley Street, a house adjacent to Kingsley Hall which had been recently purchased to provide extra lodgings for helpers. But I wasn't there very much. I visited twelve beloved nephews and nieces who had set up homes in various parts of the country, enlivened by a number of great-nephews and -nieces. The three months between arrival home and setting out again for the Far East passed all too soon. I attended the International Fellowship of Reconciliation conference in Holland and I was appointed their ambassador at large.

Doris and I were given the opportunity of joining the Sherwood Eddy party in Moscow, and flew there from London for a five days' visit. Neither of us had ever been in an aeroplane before. It seemed simple enough to eat breakfast at Croydon and early lunch in Berlin, having played Patience on the way across. Why did people talk of being airsick? Was it not a merely psychological malaise? Next day

the flight to Moscow answered the question. Tossed from side to side in a thunderstorm, I even reached the ignominy of clinging to the floor. As though that could save me!

It's obvious that five days is just enough to give one a false impression of any country. Two things, however, claimed our special admiration, the treatment of children and the opportunities provided for everybody's recreation. We came to the conclusion that if children, any children, could choose which country they would be born into, most would choose Russia. What child could resist the prospect of free entry into the amusement park? As its aim is health of body and mind, not profits, it provides facilities for children to make things for themselves. They build their own railway, not a toy affair, but a working model big enough to carry them to various parts of their domain. They have their own zoo. Could one study biology better than by tending the creatures therein? They have craft shops, studios, an electricity centre. Space, materials, and adults ready to help are always available. In the big hall where meals are attainable on presentation of a food ticket, thousands of children eat. We saw no scrambling, snatching, or struggling. But no regimentation was in evidence. The youngsters seemed to behave naturally and with complete self-possession.

The other thing that especially interested us was the anti-religious museum. Unconvincing as an attack on Christianity, it furnished splendid ideas for new methods of religious propaganda. We longed to set up similar dramatic waxwork scenes. One displayed a life-size priest, maudlin if not drunk, giving the blessing to a kneeling peasant, a fine, straightforward type of man, dressed in soldier's uniform, weapons of slaughter and defence slung all over his person. Many other object lessons enlivened the rooms. This was a Soviet edition of Bunyan's "Interpreter's House." My imagination was busy with other dramatizations of fact; the portrayal in wax models of a certain corner of Kingsley Hall clubroom when a scandal-monger or two occasionally get busy; a series of scenes, like Hogarth's "Rake's Progress," showing what happens to a normally happy family when the Means Test regulations have been in force. A father forced to live on his young son's earnings and forfeiting all self-respect thereby; a devoted daughter leaving home because only thus can she buy extra comforts for her

mother out of her wages;[1] a home near Kingsley Hall where the mother sometimes finds, after serving dinner to her husband and children, that there's nothing left for herself. All these anti-religious scenes I would display in cinema theatres as well as in church porches.

It was interesting to mark the reaction of our brilliant young guide when she listened to the service we held in the Rest House garden on Sunday morning. "I didn't know Christianity was anything like that," she confided, afterwards, to a woman of the party. Almost the same words were used on two other occasions. After the war, my friends, the Communists of Bow, asked me to join the party. I said, however much I might want to, it was impossible by their own rules; that if they would refer to certain paragraphs in their own Basis they would see that my first duty after entering the party would be to discipline myself out of it, as neither pacifists nor religious people might join. Some of them later on asked me to explain what my religion was. I felt it a tremendous privilege. At the end, one remarked to another, "That's a new religion."

One of our Fellowship of Reconciliation ministers went to Moscow. A number of commissars had kindly come together to meet him and answer his questionnaire about the state of religion there. After listing themselves as atheists, one of them suddenly turned to him and said, "What is your religion?" He took a deep breath, relying on God; then answered in a few sentences which took about half a minute of his slow Scottish speech. When he had finished, one whispered to the man next to him, "That's a new religion."

After flying back from Russia, the weeks soon slipped by until October 9th, when my ship sailed. Before setting out, I called at the Chinese and Japanese embassies. Each encouraged me. I shall never forget the Japanese official who said, "This personal method is, in my opinion, the only way in which the world will gain peace."

[1] Children's earnings are counted as family income and must be taken by the parents in place of relief from the Public Assistance Committee.

CHAPTER XXIII

Round the World Again—(1) Drugs

THIS time I was going alone. Such good luck as the company of two charming nieces was not to be expected again. Then Gladys Owen, ("Sonie") a fellow worker in Bow for many years, almost an extra half-sister, decided she could no longer postpone the journey to India that she had dreamed of and planned since long before my first visit in 1926. She had no money, having given up her school, years previously, in order to throw in her lot with the Bow folk. She was the sort of person to go without breakfast three times a week in order to supply a tuberculous club member with daily milk. Friends not only in England, but abroad, offered to lend her money as soon as her project was known, and she set out with me, carefree and cheerful, though her funds were scarcely sufficient to get her to India. She has the most honourable place among my "wise women." Compared with her thoroughness, I have never done more than play with the idea of voluntary poverty. Her plan was to renew her acquaintance with Gandhiji, help the independence movement, and at the same time take some paid job which would enable her to repay the loans. To spend two or three years in the service of India seemed to her a debt of honour. She knew by numerous personal contacts with Indians in London the state of bitterness and lack of self-confidence many of them were suffering from as a result of alien domination.

We parted company in the States. I had a big program to fulfil; my lecture fees during these three months were to pay for journeyings and living expenses of an eighteen months' tour. The Fellowship of Reconciliation people in Japan and China had laid upon me the need of a speedy return, but made it clear that there would be no possibility of their undertaking my finances as on the first visit. Then it had been a short stay, four weeks in Japan and nine weeks in China, following a full schedule all the time. But this trip was to be a long,

leisurely progress, as unprogrammed as possible. I was to travel third class, go into the interior, retrace my footsteps whenever necessary, travel up and down the country as the way opened. I wanted time to absorb something of the Chinese art of life, to learn more of the Japanese way of thinking. On the previous visit the people of both countries were continually asking me to explain Gandhiji's philosophy to them. I got almost tired of relating the same facts so many scores of times. "Why don't you go and see for yourself?" I asked. "And why don't you invite one of his followers here? It seems waste of opportunity. You are much nearer to each other geographically than I am." Of course I went on telling the same stories about India because they never lose their fascination for me, but I repeated my challenge, too. "You like the sound of life in Gandhiji's Ashram, its regular hours of prayer, its menial work, the lowly spirit of its leader daily performing the dirtiest jobs. Isn't it time you started on Ashram yourselves? Any one can, you know."

So it happened that one of the outstanding Chinese Christians, a brilliant Confucian scholar and stalwart member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, wrote to me while I was still in the States. "When you come, will you join with a few of us who want to set up an Ashram during August? An experiment, of course, but it may lead to something permanent."

I received another letter from China at about the same time, a cyclostyled letter. Dull-looking as such always are, it altered the course of my life. It was from a trustworthy traveller, and among other things it told in a few objective sentences about a town in North China where Japanese influence was supreme. As a result, the Chinese magistrate was witnessing a sudden influx of drug traffickers. These enjoyed extra-territorial rights as Japanese citizens and in this way were able to ignore the magistrate's authority. He had a good reputation; in fact the whole district was well governed and self-respecting. Opium was smoked, of course, but this heroin and cocaine trade was far more dangerous; traffic in poisonous drugs had been practically unknown in the district before the Japanese took Manchuria. Now, two years later, there were some thirty-nine illegal drug shops in this town alone, and over a hundred others in the surrounding district. They were on

the increase all the time. The magistrate therefore had told his police to watch out for any Chinese employees of these firms. One of them had been arrested with five hundred dollars' worth of drugs on him. The magistrate confiscated the stuff and sent it to the capital, Nanking. Thereupon a gang of ruffians had forced their way into the magistrate's office, demanded the release of the Chinese employé and two thousand five hundred Chinese dollars as compensation for the confiscated drugs. When he refused their request, they kept him prisoner in his own office. Eventually he paid part of the amount demanded and went home. The next day they turned up again and insisted on his paying the balance out of his own pocket. The letter-writer said it was well known that Japanese policy was to weaken the Chinese nation by protecting the many hundred Korean, Formosan, and Japanese drug traffickers who were setting up this illegal trade all over the country.

I read and re-read this paragraph. I saw our last century's sins brought up to date and committed again by a nation that was in close alliance with Britain, whose policy we encouraged, however nefarious, giving way to her all the time so long as our own trade interests didn't suffer. I longed to disbelieve the letter-writer,[1] but could not. He was the author of several reliable books. After much pondering I decided to follow the vow of truth and put the situation to some leading Japanese as soon as I reached Tokyo.

My last month in the States was spent in California. I had a week at Asilomar among six hundred students. The conference grounds stretch down through pine woods to a rock strewn headland on the Pacific coast. I talked to them the first hour every morning, and after a short break I had another hour for questions.

I was trying to make them face their fears. Youth spends so much energy trying to forget them. There's the fear of failure in examinations, fear of sex, fear of not getting a job, fear of unpopularity, fear of appearing naïve. Youth discovers many bunkholes in which to hide when frightened. They are mostly unhealthy, none of them bombproof. It's better to face each fear, to clutch it firmly, holding it in

[1] I wrote asking for names of the people and places he mentioned in his letter. He answered that it would be endangering the work and perhaps the lives of the people concerned to give further details.

God's presence till it shrivels, much as Hercules held the giant Antæus high above his head until the strength that came only from contact with the earth ebbed completely away.

The students seemed to enjoy as much as I did the public display of some well-known bunkholes, more or less the same in each generation, though the young always think them peculiarly their own.

After the last evening service, we went out of the chapel, a long silent procession in the dark, carrying tapers to throw on to the gigantic bonfire which was soon flaming and flaring into the night sky. We stood round it, pledging ourselves to fellowship and service.

In the California colleges I found a quite different atmosphere from that of 1933. Then I had been invited to lecture to the whole assembly of one of the leading colleges. The president had taken the chair and afterwards asked me to consider coming back and delivering a six weeks' course to the students. This time I wasn't allowed to speak on the campus at all. It was made clear that this was not the result of anything I had said or done in the interim. The communist scare, with all its fakes, its black list, and its red network had made even quite sensible people jumpy. I was advertised to speak just outside the campus. It was sad, though gratifying, to hear that the president had taken some trouble sending out messages to the students urging them to go and hear me.

Then I went to the Voorhis' School, surely one of the most satisfying places in the world. When this young man, Jerry Voorhis, suddenly woke up at college to face the world, his own super-privileged position, and God, he found he could no longer live the strenuous life of the very rich. He bought, instead, this fairyland tract of country, inland from St. Dimas, rich in orange and lemon groves, woods and fields, surely waiting to be peopled with boys who lacked the correct number of parents or the proper sort of environment. He has taken in Mexicans, Japanese, Chinese, but all Americans, except a boy from Bow. He, Billy Smith, a Children's House boy, aged thirteen, received a ticket to California from this young fairy godfather, who is training his family of seventy to be citizens of a better world, a new world. They are finding a Christian philosophy in their wooden chapel

wherein, above the altar, a glassless window looks out on to distant snow mountains.

During the six hours the ship allowed us in Honolulu, to my great astonishment I was taken to be garlanded by a group of boys and girls of many races. They told me that they had been meeting each week for some time to study the every-day life of English children as portrayed in various Children's House reports. At first I did not notice what the dainty links tied together with blue ribbon held. Then it appeared that each was an English pound note and there were twenty of them. Scrap-books had also been prepared containing the children's messages, favourite stories and pictures. Such a gift, of course, evoked a similar set of books in due time from our delighted Bow children.

On arrival in Tokyo I sought out an old Friend whose life has been spent in Japan. He read the paragraph in my cyclostyled letter with a weighty seriousness. He said that the only thing to do was to ask Japanese advice. With his help I was given a memorable interview with one of the elder statesmen. He asked me to state my case. I reminded him that it was scarcely a case, only hearsay. I was half ashamed to give voice to it. Calmly he bade me start. At the end of the short recital he proceeded serenely to give me a detailed account of the past and present Japanese policy regarding opium and drugs. It reminded me of many a formal statement delivered by responsible British Ministers regarding India, Africa, or other parts of the Empire, when they were trying to reassure the public that what looked wrong was really right. As his voice went on and on, a moment or two of disillusion and hopelessness overwhelmed me. What was the use of trying to keep the vow of truth? Then I bethought me . . . that this good statesman had no idea that I was trusting only to truth and had no desire to dispense blame or praise. He did not even know I was ready to confess our share of responsibility. I waited. The confident official voice ceased. He looked at me to see if I was reassured. I could only bow my head, wholly unconvinced. Then I shot my last bolt. "You know, sir, don't you, that I am not here in any way to blame Japan. Even if everything in this letter of mine proved true, I could not lift a finger of blame against you. All the time

I am conscious of the grave sin we committed against China last century in the opium wars. Our sin is greater than yours."

As sudden as an April change of weather was the difference in the atmosphere. His face lost its polite, impersonal expression. He turned to me as one human being trusting another. "Are you going to China?" he inquired.

"In a few weeks," I answered.

"Will you then please keep a careful watch? If you see anything that seems bad, go to the nearest Japanese official and tell him all about it. I will see that they are all prepared to give you every facility for investigation. Whatever you may discover that is wrong, get proof of it and reliable witnesses, Japanese if possible; if not, British or American; best of all if you could return here yourself and bring your evidence. I would see to it that your reports reached the highest quarters."

We made our way home, amazed at the outcome of our mission. Part of me, however, was concentrating on a passionate hope that I should never notice or hear of my drug misery.

There was fascinating rural reconstruction work to see in Japan. Whole villages were being delivered from debt by the coöperatives, the introduction of goats, the loan of a better strain of poultry. One American missionary was far from contact with any foreigner at the centre of a network of experiments, ranging from a coöperative shop, a nursery school, and a matrimonial bureau, to a tramps' hut that he and his small son had built just outside their own home. Some who came in as ne'er-do-wells stayed on as self-respecting members of society. The small boy almost inadvertently had started a flourishing Sunday-school in the village. He collected all his friends, the children of the village, together one Sunday afternoon, asked them to wait there, slipped home and dragged his father out without giving him any reason, and then confronted him with a *fait accompli*. "Here are the boys and girls," said the boy who was accustomed to a thoroughly good time in the graded school at his old home. "Now, Dad, start telling us stories." The missionary had thought his day overfull, but it proved elongatable. Each Sunday afternoon, the children gathered together in the open air, stood quiet, and listened. Cold weather came.

So did the children, still. At the end of the year the villagers, who had been noticing everything, offered the missionary their thanks, for his kindness and would he please accept a cottage in the village. It had belonged to a worthless fellow, expelled some months previously. Might it perhaps now house the school? It did.

Sam and Dorothy Franklin had been home on furlough since my last visit to Kyoto. It was decided that they would not return to Japan. Many besides myself, both Japanese and foreigners, were wondering what would happen to their work. Would any successor be found of the same finely tempered strength? Would another missionary family be ready to relegate themselves to the second floor, set up a gas cooker in the attic, and manage with three other rooms, a baby included? Or were the Japanese students to be bereft of their library and classroom and the wholesome self-discipline of keeping their half of the house swept, clean and orderly? I was soon to find out. A letter arrived bearing a message from their former students, offering me hospitality. This time would I be their guest? So I was met at the station by the new missionary, a young man, who, being unmarried, could not see why he needed more than one room for his own use. Consequently he had invited students to become tenants. They could do service in lieu of rent. One did gardening, another secretarial work, a third helped him with his Sunday schools. They shared their evening meal which was of Japanese food and cost less than twopence per head. The students could not have had it otherwise.

The three weeks I spent in this community gave me the same quality of joy that I feel at Kingsley Hall. It is a completely satisfying life to be one of a group of seven or eight people all intent on the same idea, all giving to it whatever skill and strength they have of body, mind, and spirit. We swept and gardened together. We studied and discussed. Before we began eating our supper we read the Bible in turn together and sang some joyful song. They showed me old Japanese pictures. I spent hours with them at the piano. One boy had a passion for Western music, could not read a note, possessed only one volume of music, Schubert's songs, and practised sedulously nothing but scales. He knew nothing else. They had grown speedier and speedier. His

fellow tenants had shown restraint in their suffering. They certainly shared his joy when I showed him a few other exercises.

As I studied the little community, formed so naturally, I began to realize that here was a Christian Ashram, the very thing that my Chinese friends were intending to set up a month or two later. The men were surprised when I congratulated them on their progress. They enquired more specifically even than before into the fundamentals of Ashram life. Gandhiji had taken the old Hindu word "ashram" and given it a new significance. It is a place where a few people who share a common purpose live together, not necessarily under the same roof, and serve a wider community. They discipline themselves with regular times of prayer. They all do menial tasks. They ignore barriers of race, class, and nation. That implies international brotherhood even in war-time.

One could not press the last condition upon young men in a foreign country; but the rest of the program was already in full swing. It added to their historic sense and to their conception of the solidarity of the human race when they realized that what they had worked out for themselves during the last few months was also being worked out by groups in India, China, America, and England.

These young men obviously were not used to housework. To sweep under the mat had seemed a waste of time. There was a sacred picture above the piano. They hung it there in honour of Christ. The glass was so covered with dust that I could write on it. Outside other garden gates, the Japanese housewives, according to custom, swept the public paths. Outside the wooden gate, the path was noticeably as unkempt as it was inside. There was no need to point this out to them. My colleague in pre-breakfast sweeping wondered why I took so much longer than he; he made opportunities to watch me, himself unseen; then, with bent head, he brought out his broom again, secured a duster, and settled down to the job. After half an hour, he found me, bowed low, and said, "I beg your pardon that I have for so long a time been sweeping so ill."

It wasn't easy to leave that shining little community. But China called.

I arrived in Peiping the day after Palm Sunday, fervently hoping

that if there were any signs of the Japanese drug traffic, I should not notice them. Dislike of responsibility may make one immoral.

Five days later I gave my first address at a Y.W.C.A. I had been asked to speak on a completely innocuous subject, Kingsley Hall, not at all likely, I thought, to stir up any unpleasant facts about Japan. The question time was safely over. The audience melted away into the tearoom. But a tall Chinese woman with a strong face of almost masculine type detained me. When we had the room to ourselves, she burst out with her question. "What would you do," she asked, "if you were in my place and saw the Japanese ruining your fellow countrymen with drugs? They entice our young people, too, even children. They give them a taste of the poison free. I'm a doctor. I know what it leads to. What can I do?"

It was strange to see an impassive-faced Chinese woman weep. My hour had come pretty promptly. I asked for names, addresses, proofs. I told her what my job was. A day or two later I found myself right in the middle of the mêlée. My friends explained that they were having trouble with a Korean drug-trader who had set up his shop immediately outside the university walls. He could not be permanently dislodged because he claimed extra-territorial rights as a Japanese citizen.

Shortly after I made my way to Changli, the place described in the cyclostyled letter. Japanese barracks were at Changli as at other towns. As more soldiers had arrived, more prostitutes came, too, of course. The county has 400,000 inhabitants, the town 15,000. I was furnished with a map of the county, showing the positions of a hundred and forty-one drug shops, all illegal, Japanese or Korean owned, set up in the last year or so. They had all countered the magistrate's closing orders with the claim of Japanese extra-territorial rights. Nearly forty of these drug shops were situated in this self-respecting little town, accustomed to good government, wherein a social conscience had been fostered for generations.

Public opinion is too strong and socially progressive for property-owners in the city to lease houses or land to the drug-traders. Consequently nearly all the shops are just outside the walls, some of them disreputable-looking shanties, clinging to the mud bank at the foot of

the wall like parasites infecting and reinfecting a fever-stricken patient. Much of the drug trade is allied with other antisocial activities—brothels, gambling-dens, unlicensed pawn shops where dope is offered instead of cash. If an injection is desired, a syringe is rented to the customer on the deferred-payment system. The first dose of heroin is obtainable at a low price, which rises stiffly as the customer becomes an addict. Lotteries were something quite new in the people's experience and the decrease in prosperity which had occurred during the last two years, due in a great measure to the Japanese evading payment of customs duty on imported goods, had made the idea of getting something for nothing specially attractive. One can purchase drugs for five cents (about three-farthings in English money). Young people are freely served.

The city authorities have had to open a clinic for drug addicts. The magistrate was engaged in his office when I went to visit the clinic, so without waiting to see him I asked to be shown in. There were twenty-five men, mostly young. Often the number is larger. There is no accommodation for women, though they have come asking for treatment.

Those who do not know and love the Japanese must remember that the citizens in that great country are as ignorant of what is being done in their name as the people of Germany and Italy, or, should I add? as my own kindly fellow countrymen. Our English newspapers never tell us details of the raids our airmen make on the north-west frontier of India. It is only if one has the opportunity of hearing the airmen themselves talk that one comes to know what they have to do.[1]

I came back to Peiping with the names and addresses of each of the

[1] One of them told us how he had met an old couple resting by the wayside. He asked what they were doing. "Only resting a moment," they said. They had been to get a drink of water. Since their well was destroyed in an air raid, the nearest one was five miles away.

A famous British airman told us of an incident which took place in Kurdistan (northern frontier of Iraq). A certain village was to be bombed. The inhabitants were warned. The pilot set out flying at about 120 miles per hour. He saw a village on a hill by a valley that appeared to correspond with the objective given him. He dropped his bombs. Soon a dismayed native chief arrived at headquarters. "How had his village offended? Wherefore this destruction? They were innocent. They had had no warning. The usual notice had not been given, so they had not abandoned their homes." The officer was equally dismayed at discovering there was another village fifteen miles further on, the real objective. The pilot's watch had been a few minutes fast.

traders in the county, well aware that this specific information applied only to one comparatively small area. The other cities in the demilitarized zone were much worse, but it was in Changli that the quality of citizenship was such that several people, both Chinese and foreign, were willing to risk loss, imprisonment, and life itself rather than witness in silence the progressive poisoning of the population.

According to my initial instructions from Tokyo, I got in touch with the consul-general in Tientsin, Mr. Kawagoe, the present Japanese ambassador to China, and heard he was expecting me. He welcomed me with great politeness, and through an interpreter we pursued the subject of drugs along a rambling route which continually led us away from our quarry. But the fact that I had been invited and welcomed seemed to me a great thing. In a few days I had a letter promising that stricter control would be exerted in the future. As in all subsequent talks with Japanese Ministers on this subject, the outstanding fact was the unworkable, equivocal, unjust damnability of the doctrine of extra-territoriality. I wonder if any other country has benefited by it as much as my own.

I dispatched to Tokyo an account of what I'd seen and offered to come back for ten days in July if my evidence was wanted. Mr. H. Tymperley, of the *Manchester Guardian*, was meanwhile helping me in numerous ways. It was a joy to find he definitely favoured the method of going straight to the Japanese officials, without apportioning blame. He gathered a roomful of journalists to hear the details of what was happening in North China, and within a few days the news had gone round the world. Now wherever I went, some foreigner or other was sure to impress on me that I mustn't imagine that North China was the only place where this sort of propaganda was going on.

One observer said, "I've knocked round the world for a good many years and seen plenty of human hate, but I've never seen anything to equal the bitterness the Chinese feel towards the Japanese on account of their drug trade."

During a long cross-country journey by bus, a drug salesman began offering free doses of heroin to the passengers. A Western traveller on the bus informed the police at the first stop. They immediately enquired the nationality of the trader. On hearing that he was Japanese, they

answered that they could do nothing. The traveller enquired what would have occurred had the criminal been American or British. "Summary arrest," was the answer.

It must not be imagined that Chinese, American, and British have no part nor lot in the drug traffic in China. The vast ramifications of the trade spread all over the world. Its clandestine methods are well known. The point of my report was the fact that it is continually protected by the presence of Japanese troops and the civilians' claim of extra-territorial rights to permit them to break Chinese law.

The Changli drug traffickers got wind of the projected raid on their premises almost as soon as Mr. Kawagoe ordered it. Espionage is generally excellent when vested interests are concerned. The Changli telephone was busy warning traders to go out of business for a week or so. Not all of them, of course. Some of the anti-social thirty-nine must remain at their posts and be arrested in order to reassure the public. So openly was the general warning conducted that when the required telephone number proved engaged, the Chinese operator was given the message in writing to deliver himself when the subscriber was free.

I was travelling between Peiping and Shanghai when suddenly a group of Japanese smugglers entered the third-class carriage. It had been a quiet, placid journey till then. Now it was all excitement, noise, and upset. The Chinese had to get off their seats to make room not only for the Japanese, but also for their big wicker baskets packed full of silk and cotton goods which had evaded customs duties. The floor was soon strewn with chicken bones, paper, and cartons. It was supper hour for these unfortunate men, whose lives were one long railway journey to and fro every day between Manchukuo and Tientsin. This was a good opportunity for a close-up study of a type of humanity hitherto unknown to me, the hardened lawbreaker, blustering and unafraid, protected by powerful anonymous employers and by Empire. There were twelve to fourteen of them. They had been on the job for months. They brought in manufactured goods. They took out silver dollars. For these, special waistcoats were provided with scores of slots sewn on to them, each the size of a Chinese dollar. Before they slept they took off this uncomfortable heavy undergarment.

Up till recently we American and British have been over-privileged travellers, cared for and protected with a zeal that might be flattering if one did not know it was caused by our ubiquitous gunboats. It was perhaps a salutary experience for us now to be counted by the Japanese just part of the crowd in China. One of the smugglers came up to where my American friend and I were sleeping, stretched over the space between us and pulled up our window with a bang. I awoke, amazed at finding myself no longer sacrosanct. I let down our window promptly and watched the man returning to his seat past eleven other windows, all shut. I don't think I looked haughty or inimical. I was too interested in this new phenomenon. When he saw what I had done he came back, not at all pleased, making signs that he had a cold. I made signs that he could have my extra coat, but the window needed more than ever to be open if he had a cold. Smugglers aren't accustomed to have their will thwarted, and he seized my coat, crumpling it up in his hands, but going off with it. I went to sleep again. My only great accomplishment is to be able to do this at any moment. I was again awakened by the same act of the same man. Again I pulled the window down, and this time he stayed by me, asserting the necessity of keeping it closed. Although all the Chinese in the carriage were aware of what was afoot, no sign or glance betrayed their intense interest. I forced myself to relax and remember his attitude was the result of circumstances, financial and imperialistic, for which he was not responsible. I offered him another of my rugs. He shook his head and retired, muttering. Another smuggler strolled up to me and examined my name and address on the luggage label. I decided not to go to sleep again for a while. I was going to guard that window. When the persistent one came up for the third time, I stretched my arm right across it so that he couldn't reach the strap without using force. I knew Japanese politeness and wanted to see if it had been quite destroyed by the curse of imperial power. I had seen often enough the wreckage of English good manners in India. He pushed my arm out of the way and shut my window once more. Of course he was the first to get tired of the tussle. He had so far to walk back to his seat each time. I had only to pull a strap from where I sat.

Down in Amoy, I found there were three hundred and seventy-

eight Japanese opium shops operating illegally and quite openly. The Chinese magistrate, unable to touch the shopkeeper, instructed his police to follow the Chinese customers on their way home and arrest them quietly so as not to precipitate an incident. The drug-traders retaliated by setting up armed protectors outside the shops to give safe conduct home to each of their clients, a new result of extra-territoriality.

Yet there is a marked tendency among the comfortably placed to make light of it. I suppose generation after generation of British people in the East have echoed the refrain, "It is impossible to keep the Chinaman away from his opium so what's the use of trying?" With the easy tolerance that comes from personal immunity, one official said to me, "The addict asks nothing better than to be left to die in peace. We've no right to deny him this pleasure."

It was my job to point out that, unfortunately, he didn't die. He sold his wife or forced his children to work at an early age to provide him with the means of buying more dope.

"There's nothing more that can be done," asserted one influential Hongkong resident. I asked if this defeatist attitude would be soon discarded if it were his own brother who was becoming an addict. "You're not really interested in getting rid of the opium evil, are you?" I challenged him. "Frankly, no," he answered, with a newly quickened interest in the conversation. "Poverty is *the* great evil, to my mind. It's that that leads to drug-taking."

I had the doubtful privilege of telling him of a neighbouring Chinese town wherein a great increase of thieving had been noticeable lately. On my arrival there, my Chinese hostess, in apologizing for a dishevelled-looking shed, explained that the local thieves had paid it a visit. "One can't blame them. It's opium. It drives them to destitution and then they have to steal. They can't help themselves."

One of the worst features of the trade is the habit of giving samples of it away to create demand.

In Canton I found that in some streets every other shop was fitted up with wooden berths like those in a ship's cabin, and in most of them smokers lay. All day long this goes on; children run in and out freely. A special launch is put on from 10 P.M. to 4 A.M. to bring smokers over from the business part of the city to the other side of

the river. Near each opium and gambling shop is the pawn shop. On the launch one can sometimes see men holding tightly to a little bundle of baby clothes which will soon be exchanged for the price of a pipeful.

Opium is a Government monopoly, but there is a great deal of smuggling. Canton people vow that its illicit importation is made possible because of the proximity of Hongkong. We may vigorously deny or disprove this, but we cannot hold our heads up very high or have complete self-respect until we have made the use of opium, except for medical or scientific use, illegal throughout the Empire.

There is little that can be done as regards the drug traffic until the aims and ambitions of beneficiaries under the present economic and imperialist system are reorientated. Callousness, open and unabashed, may be preferable in the sight of God to our Western methods of allowing nefarious trades and then assuming a posture of horror and sympathy when the condition of our victims comes to light.

I soon received the invitation to Tokyo, and set out with my evidence. It was a strange week that I spent there, going wherever I was asked, from one statesman to another, one Ministry to another, giving report. It would be a pleasure to describe some of these interviews; but the impossibility of doing so is self-evident. The amazement and distress of many was obvious. Some awoke to a new sense of duty as regards the drug traffic. In between these appointments I told the story to many groups of fine, public-spirited citizens.

CHAPTER XXIV

Round the World Again—(2) Rural Reconstruction

MY DIARY will take up the story:

1st July.—Back once more in Shanghai with most of my drug traffic work behind me. Still, I was given several unpleasant reminders of the fact that one can't lift up so much as a little finger against a great and well-entrenched evil without encountering personal dangers.

Tomorrow we start up the Yang-tse-kiang for Hankow, Yoochow, and Kuling, where a few of us are going to set up a sort of experimental Ashram for a month.

On the Yang-tse-kiang. 3rd July.—After two months of bondage to opium, it is like the Kingdom of Heaven to be on a British boat with several long days in front of me, slowly meandering up this friendly river with all the time in the world to laze, read, write, play Patience and drink tea.

Nanking. 4th July.—We stopped for twenty-four hours to see the Minister of Health. I had been told by the chairman of the Chinese Medical Board that the government's public-health work here is so fine that if it is not interfered with it bids fair one day to lead the world. Hour after hour, faint but pursuing, I looked at charts, maps, laboratories, research institutes, vital statistics, departments and places where they are hunting down the malaria parasite and any number of other unpleasant microbes. Mosquitoes of every grade and kind were doing acrobatics in glass jars, carefully segregated.

Nanking is the centre of tremendous energy. Here is the College of Political Science where officials, mayors, and magistrates, are trained strenuously and with as much severity and hard living as if they were soldiers. Imagine an English or American mayor preparing for his

term of office by studying for two or three years in a college where the discipline does not even permit a man to sit on his bed. Girls who train there dress like the boys. But it is grand to see the new sort of government officials they turn out. Dr. Mei, who was the first president of the college, showed us over the headquarters of the county government where he is magistrate. His district comprises about nine hundred square miles and six hundred thousand people. He removed the office from Nanking into the country and planned a new set of buildings where a card index of every person in the meanest and most overcrowded village home is kept up to date. He has every young man trained in self-defence and in understanding of public and social affairs. Under the old-style officials, the land tax was ninety-five cents per month and produced 300,000 (Chinese) dollars. He lowered the tax to eighty-five cents and required the people to come and pay it themselves in one of the seven sub-district offices. It produced 800,000 dollars.

Huping School, Yoochow. 7th July.—Up the river everything is devastation. The floods have submerged homes, fields, and villages. Sonie and I have never felt so weak. This part of Hunan seems to go in for damp heat. The train journey was eight hours of soot and sweat. The rain washed us clean when we got out and slithered and slid down a muddy path into a sampan to do the last three miles to Huping School by water. It is by the side of a vast lake which they tell me is three hundred miles around. At the end of an hour, we arrived at a picturesque watergate. Through this we walked, balancing ourselves on planks because of the flood, to reach the little path that zigzagged up to the top of the hill where we are staying. I was thinking of Villiers Street and the Thames watergate and Lord Essex and Queen Elizabeth, and feeling pleasantly romantic and historical when I was informed that it wasn't a watergate at all, but a garden gate; the flood is so high that the foot or two of wall we see is really a fifteen-foot wall.

Yoochow. 10th July.—The heat does not abate. Everyone is using a fan. To see one of the conference leaders making an impassioned appeal to the assembled youth, their faces, as well as his, illumined with

inspiration, perspiration and devotion, all gracefully manipulating a fan, needs getting used to. The platform I found to be the mosquitoes' favourite hunting-ground. Mosquitoes like long silent prayers. At night, we each sleep surrounded by incense and torches like a corpse before its burial.

This afternoon we joined in the conference outing to a place of historic interest. The party embarked at the foot of our garden; we had only a mile's walk after leaving the boat. But we crawled along the road, amazed at our own ineptitude. On arrival at the famous site, we evinced no sparkle of interest in anything, but sank into the seats in the restaurant, heads on arms stretched out on the table between us. We stayed that way until the students trooped gaily down, drenched in sunlight and the beauty we could not climb a few steps to see.

The conference decided to mark its adherence to the New Life Movement in China by coöperately performing a bit of manual work. A new path was to be made. With our ingrained belief in the efficacy of exercise, we wielded pick and shovel for hours in the blazing heat on two successive days, telling ourselves that sweating was good for our systems. Near here are tigers, boars, leopards, snakes, and bandits. On the little island opposite us pirates have their habitation. A little disconcerting to set off for a picnic in sailing-boats with a boy and a bamboo staff for snakes and a couple of soldiers for pirates.

Kuling. 17th July.—The river is rising all the time. On arrival at Kiukiang we transferred from ship to train in rowing boats. Children greeted us from the upstairs rooms of their homes. We were on a level with the mothers doing the family washing leaning out of the bedroom window. There was no moaning, no grumbling or despair. It is *de rigueur* in China actually and audibly to laugh at one's misfortunes.

Then came the sudden ascent here, four men to carry each chair. We settled into its comparative coolness, but felt as weak as ever. On this journey I have met a new and spasmodic friend—malaria. Because I was weary and inert, I have not bothered to cope with it properly. Yet, powerful as it is to send my blood up to a hundred and four degrees of temperature, its domination surely must be short lived. I have become rather interested in the vagaries of this new companion.

It is something outside oneself and swoops down upon one at stated intervals in a most skilful manner, so that one's voice goes queer and other people's voices sound far away and one gives up all effort of mind and spirit and lets the kind coolies sling one's bed on to ropes and gently swing it up the hill farther still to the good doctor's house whose wife seems unaccountably to have adopted one, sitting on one's bed and praying for respite.

At any rate, here we are, three thousand five hundred feet up in the air in China's great summer resort, apparently the only place where one can get cool except in the far North. As I lie in bed I watch the clouds blowing through this window quite obviously. It is completely beautiful. Tiger lilies, lotuses and great purple flowers grow wild.

29th July.—Still higher up the mountain top stands Lotus Valley, the place that P. C. Hsu and Y. T. Wu have selected for this Christian Ashram. We have assembled here and made out our program. Never before have Chinese scholars and Western friends settled down together to follow a regular, strictly disciplined program of prayer, study and recreation without cook, cleaner, or scavenger. We meet for worship at sunrise. From the wide veranda where we gather in silence, we look sheer down upon lakes and islands directly beneath us. Our little bare rooms all face the rising sun. Imagine the fiery hue of a painted lake. But often we can see nothing, for we are far above the clouds.

After half an hour's communal worship we separate for private prayer. Some of us take this, walking round our narrow mountain paths. Then come jobs. Mine is to cook breakfast, the only foreign meal of the day. We have two little pottery stoves no bigger than a middle-sized saucepan. The charcoal has to be fanned to keep it cooking. Toast, coffee, tea, hot water, and stewed fruit are the menu for the whole company. Then comes housework, laundry, latrine-cleaning. These shared jobs certainly make us know each other intimately, prevent us, too, from wasting discussion time in arguing about non-essentials. Airy theories that may sound quite clever take their proper place of irrelevancy when the rest of the company knows one to be a

shirker, a spinner of dreams to hide one's bankruptcy of deeds. A session of study, writing or discussion precedes dinner. Another follows it. Then come pilgrimages, outings, picnics, long walks, explorations, and peak-climbing. The intimacy of the evening prayers lifts some of us into a new sphere.

Kuling. 9th August.—The journey here was made in an ancient railway carriage open at one end and directly behind the coal-tender. The engine was running on soft dusty coal. Before long our faces, hands, and clothes were caked with it, too. It was about this time that I found the right way to cope with a long third class journey in the interior. Every half-hour or so an attendant comes round with a kettle to refill the tea-glasses which nearly every passenger keeps by him, an unpleasant drink, dry, strong, and with a queer flavour. I always refused till a Chinese friend nobly presented me with a packet of proper tea; I mean the sort we drink. My friend, the Confucian scholar, then gave me a tiny lustre teapot. Armed with a tin of condensed milk, I now hailed the coming of the kettle man with as much satisfaction as the rest of the coachful. Four of us shared in the delicious beverage, though one of them, being American, only had a little. On the next lap of the journey we drank forty-two cups. Blessed little teapot!

Nanchang. 23rd August.—The next colour in my Chinese pattern will be green for rice-fields, vegetables, slow moving streams and all bucolic placidities. Rural reconstruction in the interior has taken a great stride forward since my previous visit.

We left Kuling yesterday. Two men carried our baggage down the mountain and we carried ourselves; it took two hours. One part of the path is comprised of a thousand steps. Our knees won't forgive us yet. Motorbus, 'ricksha and train conveyed us to Nanchang. The third-class carriage was situated between the engine and the kitchen, rather hot but very convenient for refilling the teapot.

At sunset the train stopped. The city lay across a placid-flowing

river which changed from silver to gold, to pink, green, and grey as the light faded. The patched sail of a sampan caught the gentle breeze.

This morning we began "seeing Nanchang," a most important item in any one's education. It shows what the Chinese can do when they set to work on a new project unhampered by tradition, friends, or foes. It has been accomplished within a few years. There are fine roads and good buildings. But their chief pride is the public-health work and the aerodrome, supposed to be the best in China and the most hard working.

Chang Fu-Liang, a splendid person, the Government appointee for this rural reconstruction work drove us out to one of the ten Rural Welfare Centres. The program sounded good enough, but the actualities were better; best of all the competence, the enthusiasm, of the workers. Their premises mark a new era—the Welfare Centre housed in a Temple. "Temple into Clinic" sums up accurately much of China's new energy, although it does not signify any special trend to materialism. These neatly kept, efficient little surgeries, dispensaries, and consulting-rooms have displaced the dust of centuries on ten-foot high figures of frantic-looking temple guardians, with fiery breath and pointed teeth. In one temple, now functioning as a school, there sat a gold-painted Buddha looking serene inside a curtain hung round him in all reverence.

The workers in these centres are young men and women, doctors, midwives, teachers, agriculturists, and just "common-sensible" people who know how to make friends, how to live together and work by schedule. They take only small salaries. The villagers have come to trust them. They bring their lawsuits to them now. One of these young people suddenly found himself faced with an old family quarrel involving hundreds of people. The case was all about a small bit of land, one-fifth of an acre; it had been dragged through the law courts for months and was now about to be taken to the Supreme Court. Neither family, the Hsuings or the Lins, would give way to the other. "Then what about going to the new Welfare Centre and letting them decide?" suggested some one. The idea appealed to both sides. They accepted the invitation to meet at the village temple and apologize to each other. The dispute was over, but the land not yet apportioned.

Neither side wanted or needed it; neither wanted the other to have it. So they gave it to the Centre.

Lichwan, Kiangsi. 25th August.—It took us seven hours to get here. Last year seven days would have been needed. The new road is excellent. Our journey's end was a quiet seventy minutes' walk through twilit field paths to the village where our Chinese friends have settled down, sixteen of them, as a Christian community of service and fellowship. A little river runs along the side of our house. Buffaloes lollop in and out of the rice-fields. Round us the fireflies keep up a dazzling play of light. Dragon flies have apparently chosen this site for their favourite abode, blue-winged, golden-winged, transparent-winged, some with scarlet bodies, some with brown. But the specialty seems to be a creature like a flying purple clematis; its wings are shaped like petals of some delicate black texture, its body turquoise blue. All round are fields of vegetables, tobacco, mushrooms, of two-crops-a-year red rice. We find if we fix our minds hard on oatmeal porridge and swallow the rice quickly it does not seem too unpalatable. This house was the Communist headquarters for over a year.

The cormorant-fishers came this morning, each on his swift-moving raft made of five bamboo trees about fifteen feet long. The cormorant, a peculiar bird, presides at one end, looking solicitous. The man in blue cotton and straw basket hat manipulates his punt pole, lets out his net and drops stones overboard at intervals to keep it on the bed of the river. Though the birds kept diving energetically, I saw only one get a fish. He began to swallow it, but was intercepted. In an instant the pole swooped him up to his master, who held him over a basket till he disgorged it.

Dotted over the fields are the water-wheels, eight feet long, of simple construction and capable of being carried on a man's shoulder. They scoop up water for the crops from ditches, pools and lakes. Under the straw umbrella, stuck at a rakish angle over the wooden pedals, two boys tread incessantly. I hope they are as happy as they look.

In case I was grossly deceiving myself in my high estimate of Chinese character, I "pumped" my week-end host, a wise Episcopal clergyman, suggesting to him some criticisms that another traveller had made to

me. From his rich experience, he quietly refuted them all. I have been reading *Ethical Realism among the Neo-Confucian Philosophers* and gather that the Chinese do not believe in original sin or their own "worminess" of character. Is this why they are so free from self-assertion and aggressiveness? They are brought up expecting to enjoy life, each other, and heaven.

Nanking, 11th September.—China's new capital! Its strong old walls stretch round it for twenty-three miles.

Late one night, five of us set out to visit a near-by village with Frank Price of the Nanking Theological Seminary. Some of the villagers had just put their beds out and others were sleeping indoors, but as soon as they heard Frank Price had come, they literally ran out of their mud huts, one man putting on his coat as he came, all of them with faces lit up with delight. Men and women, young and old, gathered round to converse in the moonlight. According to their custom, they talked of foreign lands, of the stars, of the crops, of India and world brotherhood. At length one said, "It is good of you to leave beautiful London to come to our dirty little village." It was not necessary to contradict those untrue words; only Chinese polite phraseology. Later on one of them suggested, "I believe if the working-people of every country could meet each other, they would make a good peace." "Perhaps you could speak some words of prayer, simple enough for us to understand," suggested another. They all stood up. I felt ashamed as I prayed for all our needs to be supplied. They were so much richer than I in courage, service, and cheerfulness; I so much richer in perishable goods.

I asked a Cabinet Minister yesterday why they don't get a better press for China in America and Europe. "Bandits" or "fighting the Communists," are overworked news items in every Western news paragraph concerning China. Yet their roadmaking, administration improvement, engineering, railway-building, sanitation, and public health have in three years changed the face of the nation. He said it would cost millions of dollars a year, and China cannot yet afford it.

Here is a fair example of "foreign" propaganda. Two people I know were planning to come from Manchuria to China. They were

told that Chinese bandits, one hundred and twenty of them, had held up and attacked the train two days previously and killed many passengers. A berth for the night would be unprocurable because the sleeping-car had been smashed. They came, however, and found that "the hundred and twenty bandits" were a few men in the third-class carriage who tried to steal silver dollars. No one had been killed. Some were injured because they got panic-stricken and jumped out while the train was going. The berths were procurable and the sleeping-car functioned as usual.

Honan, 16th October.—Here in Honan are bandits. We have plenty of soldiers to guard our trains, but the teachers and missionaries go continually along these lonely roads into the interior, staying for months at a time in Chinese village homes, eating whatever is set before them, and sleeping with the family. They seem to enjoy these itinerating seasons better than staying in their comfortable compounds, whither they return happy and emaciated to get nourished once more, ready for the next excursion.

Near Wei Hwei, which we left this morning, they are doing some productive digging. They have just excavated five tombs, the burial-place of China's kings who were contemporary with Abraham. As it was counted an honour to die with the king, some were buried alive, it is believed, because of the agonized and twisted position of head and limbs. Hundreds were de-headed; bones and teeth were in excellent condition. Thirty trunkless heads lay in one grave and the bodies were buried near by, arranged systematically with the balance and symmetry that Confucius, a few hundred years later, thought so much of.

Paoting, 26th October.—At last I've seen a bit of work that costs no money at all, fulfils its aim, and seems to bring complete joy to all connected with it. Last year a missionary couple roamed round the country near Paoting, looking for a normal village where they could begin an experiment. They found one with about two hundred families, poor crops, unsanitary conditions. It was oppressed by soldiers, contained about the usual amount of jealousy and gambling. But the

headman and village elders were eager for rural reconstruction and welcomed coöperation. One of them said, "You teach me about Christianity and I will teach you about Buddhism, and hand in hand we will travel the road to Heaven." This was to be Chinese reconstruction, not missionary propaganda. The missionaries found that the people had long wanted a mass education class. "Arrange it yourselves, then, and we will help," said the couple. Five nights a week the Buddhists taught, and the other two nights the missionaries. They started a farmers' class to improve crops, and before the year was out held an agricultural exhibition for the district. Proudly they displayed their 150-per-cent improvement in the Kooliang crop, the increased weight of their Poland-China cross-bred hogs.

Then the village started a day school which showed such good results with its voluntary teachers that when the district officials were seeking the right locality for a Government school, they chose this place. There was much trachoma about, so they set up a clinic which is open for several hours daily and is served by one of the villagers who was sent to a Government training centre to fit him for the job. A library was collected and a reading room opened, also through their own efforts. When New Year holidays approached they were deploring the fact that there was never anything to do but gamble. "Why not prepare your own entertainment?" was the obvious retort. This is their own description of what followed:

"Acting on Mr. Sang's suggestion, we organized a Recreation Committee which divided into several bands. One band practised Chinese boxing under the efficient leadership of a village man. Later this band went to the near-by villages, and our whole village received much honour because of the good work our representatives did. Another band planned a variety of simple games to take the place of gambling. In the old days each village planned a theatrical in connection with temple worship. This religious aspect has been nearly lost and for several years no plays have been produced. Stimulated by our efforts, the other villages began to prepare entertainments, so that in the holidays there were plenty of alternatives to gambling. The fun began about dark. Often while we were eating our supper we would hear

drums, and a friend would rush in. 'The players are coming from Wu Li Hei!'

"We put down our chopsticks, slid into our overcoats, and went to meet the neighbours. Here they came with lanterns waving, down the dark road. As they moved nearer we could hear the boom of the drum, as large as a dining-room table, the sound of fifes and horns making a tremendous harmony in pounding rhythm. As they came still nearer we saw the characters written on the lanterns, 'T'ien Hsia T'ai Ping'—'To all the world, peace.' How they were welcomed by the whole village!

"Round the platform in the largest courtyard the people stood, listening to an historical play or bit of folklore, applauding each act, trailing along to hear the last strains of the music at the temple. Then we would go home to warm our toes and eat our supper. Hardly had we finished before another messenger would arrive with the good news, 'Here they come from Hsin an P'u!'

CHAPTER XXV

India Again

SINCE first meeting Dr. Korah, a gifted doctor of philosophy, in Tokyo in 1933, we had corresponded, sharing the hope that one day a party of women from Japan, China, India, U.S.A., and Europe might travel together, meeting with the women of the world and making long-term plans for peace. She managed to get a long-enough leave of absence from her college duties to accompany me to India. My friend Lydia Tau, of Shanghai, decided to join us there. As Gladys Owen is Welsh, we felt like an embryo League of Nations.

The three of us arrived at Calcutta on December 16, 1935. We were met by three cars belonging to the Khaitan brothers and were soon ensconced in their guest-rooms. One of them had fourteen French windows and doors, the other thirteen. The ladies live up on the third floor of this enormous house, and the literally dozens of children and grandchildren roam about or play badminton or cricket in the marble-paved courtyard round which the house is built.

Next morning before breakfast we paid a visit to the Sikh temple where those mild-eyed giants worship, reading aloud their holy books all day long and every day. Then we went to see Satesh Babu, who glories in taking his fellow Brahmins and Untouchables in to live and work with him. He trains his helpers to go on the scavenging rounds with the municipal sweepers,[1] helping them carry away the filth in their wretched baskets which leak unpleasantly. These would have been replaced long ago by zinc cans or pails if the municipal councillors who employ them had taken upon themselves this sort of self-discipline or developed their imaginations a little. On a previous visit I had seen the little mud huts where their employés live. They are within ten yards or so of an open sewage river. The stench was almost unbearable. Yet Satesh Babu came regularly to this place, sit-

[1] Scavengers.

ting outside their huts, teaching them letters and something more valuable, self-respect. He had a third Ashram to show us now, a tannery to which village centres all over India can send their people to learn the processes involved, from contracting for the carcasses of cattle to the production of super-comfortable shoes and excellent sandals of flexible hand-worked leather. Here the Brahmins and Untouchables are working side by side and studying, some of them, for the Bachelor of Science degree. Satesh Babu, a keen business man, now uses in the service of his people the scientific training and experience that once produced only private profit.

Next day we called on Dr. B. C. Roy, the Bengal Congress leader. He founded and runs a big tuberculosis hospital and has just acquired two hundred acres from the Government for a transition home. Here his cured patients can be gradually accustomed to a full-time job on the land under skilled supervision. Over tea he gave us some of his reminiscences. As long ago as the 1890's his mother insisted on going about alone dressed in homespun, refusing to wear jewellery or long hair, because such privileges were denied to other girls who happened to be widows. She died when Dr. Roy was a boy, but his father was an equally original person who insisted on B. C. doing menial work for a month or so after passing his matric. For ten days he had to wash the household crocks, for ten days clean the house and for ten days see to all the latrines.

A very orthodox Marwari, a leader of his business community, called on us. He began talking about the evil results of the cinema on Indian character. As it was Christmas week, Calcutta certainly seemed to be displaying advertisements of a super-voluptuous sort. I said that we in England had them imposed on us in just the same way; it was unfair to blame the West; we must blame the profit system. He agreed and confessed that Indian-produced films were quite as bad as Western ones; members of his own community, moreover, ran these cinemas with no idea but for money-making; the government ought to do something. I reminded him that all governments except Russia are more or less under the thumb of big business, and therefore it fell to the public to make a move. Why not set up a League of Decency for India similar to that which had effected some improve-

ment in the West? As a result of this talk I found myself embarked with him on a round of inspection of the leading cinemas of Calcutta. He had been asked to speak on the subject at the All India Marwari Conference the following week. That's the extraordinary thing about the East; you say a word or two, make some innocent remark, tell a story, and you find it taken seriously and involving all sorts of people. It's very humbling. My diary will supply the rest of the chapter.

Lahore. 21st January.—Nothing happened at Delhi except that we nearly froze. I had no idea that India could be so like London. Here we are staying at the Ashram of the Servants of the People Society, founded by Lala Lajpat in 1921. Sethiji invited us. I hadn't met him since 1926 when he took me up to the Gurukula near Hardwar, where he was teaching. It was a long journey. We had to cross several tributaries of the Ganges, once wading, once in a carrying-chair (but I soon got down from that; the men looked too thin, and I felt too imperialistic perched upon their shoulders), and once upon a raft of bamboo poles fixed on empty petrol-tins. When the wind was in the wrong direction, the boatman would give up his oar and swim behind the raft, pushing it.

Yesterday was pretty ghastly. We started out in a borrowed car with a member of the Legislative Assembly to see the Golden Temple at Amritsar. But first we went to our place of penance, the six acres of field and gardens, an enclosed area in the heart of the city, preserved just as it was on April 13, 1919, when British soldiers were ordered to shoot into the huge open-air meeting that was being held there. Martial law had been proclaimed, the curfew order given, and all public meetings forbidden. But many hundreds of people had come from near-by villages who didn't know about that. Their minds were on one thing—Gandhiji and two others had been interned. Of course, accounts vary as to the number killed and wounded, but all agree to hundreds of casualties. A small door leading into a large metal gate which was locked was the only other way into or out of the meeting-place. A small temple provided cover for those who crouched behind it, but there was not much room there.

The Sikh and the Hindu who accompanied me understood General

Dyer's motive and quoted his statements to me word for word. But what seemed to me most painful of all the details, worse than the bullet marks on the walls, more terrible than the window where a small boy, watching the meeting, stopped a stray bullet which killed him, was the fact that from eight o'clock that night, curfew hour, the victims, dead and wounded, were left there unattended; their relatives and friends were ordered out.

Imagine the agony of having to leave one's husband to die alone amidst hundreds of unattended casualties, calling for water! One splendid woman whose portrait hangs on the gatekeeper's wall defied the military and stayed all night, tending her husband and bringing water to him and to others.

Opposite the office is a notice board, saying, "This ground is hallowed by the mingled blood of Hindus, Moslems, and Sikhs, shed by British bullets, April 13, 1919." Near by, the Mohammedan gardener who was in the affray himself has his pot of marigolds and violets. He made a nosegay of some of them which his small son presented to me. As we drove away after about an hour in the gardens, the thing most in my mind was the surprise of Indian friends to discover that I am trying to see it all from their point of view. I assured them that nearly everyone in England would feel the same as I, but they could not believe it. I keep explaining that of all the millions of ordinary, non-imperialist, non-militarist Britons, I happen to be the lucky one who gets facilities for travelling to India. I'm pretty sure it is this mistaken idea of theirs that people in England are like the British out here that has to be refuted by more and more ordinary citizens accepting their overwhelmingly generous hospitality.

At the Golden Temple, the headquarters of the Sikh religion, my old-time good impression of their faith deepened. No caste, no priests, no sex barriers! Every person must be trained to take his part in carrying on their worship, which lasts twenty out of the twenty-four hours. They have no idols, only continuous reading of their Scriptures and the singing of prasies to God. They have a common kitchen at which rich and poor have the privilege of helping to cook meals for any one who cares to sit down with them. There were ten men making bread when I was there; "love workers" was the Sikh word for our

"voluntary." The only requirement is cleanliness. A different religion is no barrier. Moslems were happily helping at the worship in the inmost sanctuary. A feeling of serenity, freedom, and joyful reverence, yes, just those two words not often put together, pervaded everything. The place was very clean. Then we saw another building, the administrative headquarters of Sikhism. Successive Gurunaks have been installed there since the time of Luther. Their word is law. Seventy-odd years ago, the British insisted on appointing their own nominees to this post, a frightful blow, for Sikh had been proud of their democratic system. General Dyer, all unwittingly, put a stop to this régime. The day after the slaughter at Jallianwala Bagh, he presented himself at the Golden Temple and the tame Gurunak played his rôle and presented the general with the highest honour he had to confer, a Sikh robe. The news was broadcast across the world. Of course the reaction gathered strength until in 1926, after a long-drawn-out struggle and protracted non-violent civil disobedience, the Gurunak appointment was once more in the hands of the Sikhs.

Driving back in the evening, we were halted by a great crowd in the road. On inquiry I found I was in the midst of another struggle. The road was lined on both sides with Sikh men, women, and children, all quiet and orderly. Beside the road were twenty-five Sikhs dressed in black and gold. They had walked the thirty miles from Amritsar. Having taken the vow of Non-violence, they were about to enter Lahore, carrying their *kirpans*, which three weeks ago were proclaimed illegal by the Governor, Mr. Emerson. The *kirpan* is a short dagger which, since the beginning of their religion, has been one of the five signs of Sikhism. It has never been proscribed before. It is not used as a weapon. There has been no case of assault brought up against them. We watched them as they prayed. They then started walking straight and slowly and upright towards the police wagons which awaited them. So strange a contrast between their expression and the faces of the police! The hardening process is inevitable and rapid out here.

28th January.—We have returned to Calcutta for the meetings of the International Council of Women. The Maharani of Baroda presided,

Princess Cantakuzene of Roumania sat on her right, Lady Ezra, Lady Pentland and Dame Elizabeth Cadbury on her left. All the pillars in the hall were swathed in orange, green, and white, the colours of the Indian National Congress. Little tabs of red, white, and blue were hung very neatly and sufficiently at the back of the platform on a large banner displaying the spinning-wheel.

At first all the speeches were formal. Only at the end did they warm up. The Princess talked French and had such a fine, clear delivery that even those of us who were inferior linguists could catch her meaning. She spoke of the Indian women, their gentle attitude, subtle spirituality and "magnifique program." She begged the Maharani on her next visit to England to stop at Roumania. "Come. You will feel at home, for our cultures are near each other."

Dame Elizabeth's garland was beautiful to English eyes. Her hostess must have chosen the crimson roses, the corn flowers and all the cottage garden colours on purpose to remind us of our herbaceous borders at home. She pointed out that the much-talked-of social services of England were of fairly recent growth. Till this century our work was mainly individualist. India might easily beat us in social service even though she had started later than we. At the end an Indian speaker proceeded to unpin, as it were, the festoons of flattery. Till then, Indian and British speakers alike had ignored the deep cleavage, almost the chasm that exists between the Indian people and the foreign Government. She said, "You have come to India. You can no longer see our fabulous wealth, but only hunger and poverty and a great crying for liberty. We have awakened out of the bad dream of nationalism. The cry of Ethiopia rings through the whole world. The race for armaments goes on, and the scramble for markets. Sisters, in the sumptuous drawing-rooms of Calcutta, please do not forget the real India of peasants. Their aim is to get at least one meal a day, but they fail even in that. . . . Sisters, you cannot be free while we are not."

Jullundar, 7th February.—Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur is known in London as one of the three chosen representatives of India's womanhood, in other places as a lawn-tennis champion, in India as an educationalist, in the Punjab as a pioneer. I spent yesterday with her in still another

rôle, that of Agent of the All India Village Industries Association, Gandhiji's newest creation.

We drove out to Manguwal to see the village work there. It seemed like a fairy tale to find peacocks in the fields and numberless green parrots flying round about us. Kingfishers further enlivened the landscape. Soon the road became so bad that an approaching wagon raising waves of dust looked like a large boat pushing its way through rough water. As we slowed down an old man in a Gandhi cap made a deep bow to Amrit. He takes his stand at the same place every time she comes and proffers the same request that she must visit his village half a mile away and start an All India Village Industries Association there also. His title to honour, if not to fame, is that he has just celebrated the wedding of his granddaughter on the total expenditure of eight annas. A progressive indeed!

We were met by a crowd of boys and girls, brooms in hands, the energetic supporters of the worker who has settled down to give whole-time service here. They all led us proudly through the length and breadth of the village. Its roads were beautifully clean. More and more of the inhabitants are contributing their labours regularly to that end. They have drained away a stagnant pool by communal labour and have built up over it a strong circular platform, two to three feet high, where the women can sit and talk and spin in the cool of the evening. They have designs on other mosquito-breeding ponds also.

Our numbers swelled as we walked; people peered out of their windows, clustered on roofs to watch, lurked inside doorways. The excitement was at its height when we reached the open door of a hut which had been lent by its owner, ever since the work started here five months ago, for the beginning of a girl's school. Certainly only reading and writing have been taught so far, and the room is absurdly small; there's only one teacher, aged thirteen. She and a younger friend are the only literate females in the village. But the number of students has grown to fifty-nine. The women and girls crowded round us in this school of theirs while the men had to wait outside. There are two windows, however, through which a dozen or so of them watched the proceedings. At one point the young teacher closed the shutters, perhaps to let

the men realize how out of it they were. But the heat and darkness very soon caused her to give the outsiders back their view.

From the school we went to a large congregation of men waiting for a Tamasha. From all adjacent roofs the women watched the scene. First a hymn about Gandhiji was sung by the teacher and her young brother; then the village elder held forth and soon a lively discussion on local affairs was in full swing.

After an hour or so we made our way to the car. The boys and girls had put away their brooms. They were now exerting themselves to display the soundness of the new wheelbarrows they have just acquired. They pushed them in sprightly fashion, trundled them at breakneck speed, made them twist and curve like frisky ponies; lively wheelbarrows!

28 February.—Nine years ago when I first came to India, I was not exempt from the wretched shame one feels, the dishonour, here, of being British. But this time it is much worse. Probably it is the result of those months I spent with the Chinese people, feeling more firmly every day the heel of Japanese imperialism pressing down upon us. China's sorrows, China's insults, and China's bondage are so real that they are a burden even to her foreigners. Filled with the atmosphere of these months, I come directly to India and find myself more alert than on either previous visit to what is going on. It is much clearer to me now, the depth of spiritual havoc that is being wrought. Should one grain of humour be allowed entry into the official mind, I don't believe the present way of governing could persist. A sense of the ridiculous would make it impossible for us to keep adorning Indian cities with large-sized statues of British gentlemen of full-bodied habit in frock coats. A shred of psychology would prevent us from continually irritating so many fine young people with our attitude of conscious, even self-trumpeted, rectitude. A little science would change the technique of our detectives. They stand for hours outside one's gate, pretending to admire the view, while the householder and all his guests know perfectly well which of them is being shadowed; they know also the complete innocence and integrity of the suspected ones; moreover, they know that the detectives know it too.

Spying is always an expensive method of acquiring information. Friendship elicits all one needs much more quickly. And it's definitely more reliable. So long as our officials in various parts of the world live in British style, high and lifted up, they must depend on their paid dependents, spies and otherwise, for information. But what they get for their money is sometimes far removed from the truth. We spend thousands of pounds on paying men to spy and lie all round the world. It is a calamitous procedure to subsidize the breaking down of confidence between man and man. It was a good many centuries before our ancestors dared to trust each other. Civilization is built upon this trust. Without it life would have few values.

The process of getting our own British way because of the communal jealousies among these three hundred and sixty million people has continued for so long that the old maxim, *Divide et impera,* may be followed quite unconsciously. Now under the new Constitution we seem to have fastened communalism on them. For instance, if I lived in India, I could not vote for Mrs. Hamid Ali, one of the three representatives of organized Indian women, nor for my old friend, Anasuya Sarabhai, the Ahmedabal social worker. I am made to inquire as to their religious labels. I find one was born Hindu, and the other Moslem. I am Christian. There's doubtless many a fine character among the Indian Christian women today, but I doubt whether they are going to enter politics. I know of only one, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur. But I find I may not even vote for her. She has brown skin. Mine is white.

A certain young Indian took a lot of trouble while I was staying in his city to provide for my needs by borrowing from various friends such European blessings as an electric iron and a sewing-machine. Months later I happened to meet him on a railway journey. He was paying a short visit to a sick friend in the city to which I was bound. On arriving at the terminus, I asked him to find out for me the cost of hiring a car for the latter part of the journey, instead of going by train. I was in the restaurant at breakfast when I heard that he was in trouble. I hurried out and found him held up by a policeman who was demanding his name and address. The stationmaster was shouting abusively at him, accusing him of soliciting orders for a car-owning partner. The humiliation I felt at having to rescue my benefactor from

the hands of these officials remains with me always. Even when I had convinced them of their error, I could not get them to apologize.

Long ago in Bengal, when the Terrorist movement was in its infancy, a wise Indian in the Indian Civil Service was appealed to by a schoolmaster, panicky because one of his students had written *"Bande Matarem"*[1] on the lavatory wall. The official counselled humour, common sense, and an increase in frankness and understanding between scholars and teachers. His advice proved successful. The students' patriotism was diverted into safe channels. In another area the same thing occurred. On this occasion, his advice was overridden. Punishment of the offender, repression and dismissal, dragged out their usual course. Sensitiveness developed into inflammation. The dismissed student leader was looked up to as a martyr, became completely anti-social and has had a subversive influence in the neighbourhood ever since. But my friend the official was debarred from promotion because of that wise action of his.

An Indian business man had studied many years both at Oxford and London Universities. He wanted to set up a peasant school in a rural area out here. The district official, an Englishman, was in full sympathy with the scheme. But pressure was brought to bear on him by the Government to put his school under their aegis. He had strong opinions about education, however, and wanted to be free of the regulations and delays inevitable in centralization. After a month, permission was withheld. Obviously Government does not smile on such independence in education. Then came a sudden political crisis. Immediately permission was proffered as a *quid pro que* for his support of the Government. This seemed so like a bribe that the philanthropist whose interests did not lie along political lines reacted in disgust and became a Gandhi man forthwith.

How deeply we are wounding our own country by providing well-paid jobs to so many British people in this country, where to be white means that one is deferred to and considered at every point! While waiting at a railway station I was brought an armchair. Tired of sitting, I strolled along the platform, only to discover the chair being silently carried along behind. Generations of Memsahibs have contrib-

[1] The first two words of their national song "Hail, Mother.

uted to that action. And it only makes for bad citizenship on our return to Britain.

The lāthi charges of 1930 and 1932 all the world knows about, but one has to come to India to see how quickly East End boys in the police force here acquire the lordly, leisurely, self-confident air of the ruling race. I watch a young Englishman on point duty. He wields his stick to point the way the traffic is to go, but he finds it harmless fun now and then to hit a coolie with it. Only an encouraging, good-tempered hit it seems to the policeman. The coolie may or may not recognize its gay insouciance. But something precious in England is damaged every time it happens.

Once a visiting Western philosopher was being seen off at the station by Indian friends who showered kindness upon him. When the train started he got into conversation with his English fellow traveller. "How friendly these Indians are!" he exclaimed. "Ah," grunted the Englishman, "it's all right for you to be like that. You haven't got to rule over them."

One time when I was staying wtih an eminent Hindu barrister, a strong Anglophile, I noticed him starting out for a long train journey in Indian dress. I was surprised that he had troubled to change his Western clothes. He explained that Indians were so often insulted on the railways, pushed out of a compartment, if a European were in it, sometimes struck. If he dressed as a foreigner he was saved all such indignities. And he preferred to suffer them. It gave him the opportunity of quietly withstanding this treatment and disarming by courtesy the haughtiness of the Englishman. All his life he had been specially interested in British people. When quite a little boy he was taken by his uncle to see the illuminations put up in Calcutta to welcome the Duke of York, afterwards King George V. They avoided the crowds and went with other quiet, cultured people to the less frequented side of the gardens. Soon a British soldier came along and proceeded to hit each person who happened to be in the front line. When the soldier reached the boy, his uncle quietly announced, "If you touch this boy, I will assuredly strike you." The boy watched the soldier's arm, already raised over his head, hang suspended a moment in surprise and then withdraw. A little later, he was impressed by a

great kindness done by one of our curious race. He was in the front row of a football match, impeding the view of an Englishman just behind him. The man suddenly caught him by his coat collar and hoiked him backwards. Before he could catch his breath or even brace himself for the further rough treatment that was sure to come, another Englishman announced, "If you lay your finger on that boy again, I'll knock you down!" Peace reigned after that and was enjoyed by all.

"So you see," summed up my friend, "whenever I find an Englishman doing something bad, I always find another who wipes out the sting with something good. And all my life it has been so." C. F. Andrews quotes the words of Hindu friends: "We are such a sentimental people that if one of your rulers here would speak out from his heart to us just once and say he regretted incidents of the past, we would be so overjoyed that we would even now change our policy."

CHAPTER XXVI

My One-Roomed Home

IT WAS the 1st of March, 1936, only a few weeks now before my arrival in England. Spring would be near; soon I would be picnicking in the meadows, golden with buttercups and hedged round with hawthorn; it was nearly three years since I had last experienced that bliss. I had been making plans for housekeeping. Never again would I go away without leaving a *pied-à-terre* in England. When I last set out I had fitted all my belongings, including papers, into one drawer, and that was somebody's else who also lacked cupboard space. Below the room that Doris had lent me was an unused kitchen. The idea had come to me while in India to stake my claim for that room and keep it inalienably my own for ever.

When greetings were over and I had worn down all opposition to my project, I took possession. The room is an odd shape, but it has three windows and a door leading into a garden which measures forty-five by thirty-six feet and is bounded on one side by a railway wall over the whole length of which a well-established Virginia creeper hangs; on the other side is a high blank wall covered with a vine. A rhubarb plant, my favourite fruit, if it is a fruit, grows in a corner. I know nothing about gardening, but I intended to make a lawn and a hill somehow. It's not good to live, bereft of all sense of up and down. I proceeded to pile up at one end of the garden all the old bricks, crockery ware, bits of guttering and concrete which some untidy builder had left behind him. To hide the domestic nature of my hill I needed earth. The flowerless garden beds could not be further impoverished. I decided to shave off the top inch from the surface of the whole garden excepting beds and paths, and throw the product on the hill. It became the joke of the community. Children liked to run up it; and having run down again, to enjoy their sense of power in demolition. I was very stern with various play-hour leaders who could not implant in their children a reverence for humble origins.

At last the thing stuck together. Aubricia and nasturtiums gave it integrity.

Now came the effort to educe from the large expanse of shaved earth grass enough to call it a lawn. Grass seed did not seem to work. But the gravel paths produced a healthy crop with gusto. Bit by bit, I removed the surface of the paths and presently a proper lawn appeared. Later I acquired a sunk pool made out of a discarded copper. When it has stopped leaking, it is going to be adorned with kingcups, iris and goldfish. They are all ready waiting for the water to remain constant. Wire barricades have made the whole place cat-proof.

What I would like to do is to enumerate the many charms of my one-roomed home, but even an egoist who has reached her last chapter remembers that there are limits. Its unique feature is the thirty-inch-wide shelf painted jade green so as to be unnoticeable when let down as a flap over the wooden panels of the same shade that run round the kitchen wall. This is the bed. Its camp mattress and other impedimenta live in the cupboard. The sink is large and good to wash in; the dresser holds books as well as crockery. The plain yellow walls show up a few pictures.

It was difficult to tear myself away from the job of whitewashing the outside walls and painting the window frames, drain pipes, and myself a turquoise blue. But I soon had to pack up my briefcase and go to Geneva. Mr. Leonard A. Lyall, chairman and Assessor of the Opium Advisory Committee of the League of Nations, and one or two other experts had seen my letters from China and wanted a talk. Malaria laid me low as soon as I arrived. It was my worst, seventh, and last bout. How well I understood now the Psalmist's declaration, "My bones are consumed within me. My strength is become like water." The evidence I took proved of some value, and Mr. Lyall used it in his speech at the Opium Advisory Committee during the annual session on opium which was held a week or two later. He appealed to Japan in the following words:

". . . If the Chinese people once become convinced that Japan is chiefly to blame for all the lives that are wrecked by heroin, the amount of hatred that will be engendered may last for generations.

"A hundred years ago much the same thing was going on in the

South as is now happening in North China. But in those days it was opium, not heroin, that was being smuggled, and this opium came from India. Most of the opium was actually smuggled by Chinese, but it was imported into Canton by British merchants, and behind the British merchant stood the power of the British Government. When a courageous Chinese Viceroy confiscated and destroyed twenty thousand chests of opium owned by British subjects, China was compelled to pay six million dollars compensation and to dismiss the Viceroy for his anti-British attitude. And the smuggling continued.

"The political differences between England and China did not cause much ill feeling and the fighting that they led to was very soon forgotten. But for nearly a century the relations between England and China were poisoned by Indian opium. This was what Consul Alcock wrote about it in the middle of the nineteenth century:

" 'The Chinese regard the British as the great producers, carriers and sellers of the drug, to our own great profit and their undoubted impoverishment and ruin. Hostility and distrust can alone be traced to this source. No other feelings flow from it, and the consequences will meet us at every turn of our negotiations, in our daily intercourse, and every changing phase of our relations. It must be seriously taken into account and calculated upon as an adverse element in all we attempt in China.'

"England made the mistake of allowing a moral question, in which she was wholly in the wrong, to get mixed up with political questions, in which she had a great deal of right on her side. For the sake of China and for her own sake, I hope Japan will be wiser than we were."

It was a happy homecoming for me, conscious that at last I had handed over to a permanent body of representatives of many nations much of the responsibility that had so long burdened me.

It is a fact, however, that there is no rest for the wicked. Whoever has enlisted in the war against poverty, callousness, greed, and fear never gets the chance to settle down with a pension. I happened to go north to Tyneside. I thought the people I saw must have been ill. Then I found they were normal, these pallid, weedy-looking grown-ups. Children played in the streets with little vigour; theirs was the same enfeebled, undernourished look; unemployment was rife. Then

I knew what my fellow traveller meant when she said, "It doesn't look as though England had won the war, when you look at the working-people there."

Thousands of them could have acquired good food, good pay, and good clothes if they had joined the fighting forces. Yet recruiting was low. Those in authority confessed publicly that this was the result of widespread pacifist sentiment. Men who were offered work in a munitions factory and warned that refusal would mean losing their income from the Public Assistance Committee had remained steadfast to their determination to give no help in preparing slaughter. It is a challenging spectacle, especially when there are young children dependent.

Several friends from China visited me in London. Drug-traffickers, they said, were increasing in numbers and business. The habit now was to set up a pseudo-clinic at village fairs claiming to cure tuberculosis and many other ailments. The villagers came, paid their five cents, and were given heroin. Thus the taste grows all the time. News came too of the continued effort of public spirited Japanese, of high position and low, to curb the drug-traffickers in China. I received a list of twenty-five traders who had been arrested, tried and punished.

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation held its conference in Cambridge. Dictatorship had taken its toll of our membership. The shadow of war was upon us. We learned much from our Belgian, Dutch, French, German, and Italian members. The courage of our continental friends was superb, their lack of bitterness a miracle. Their quiet confidence in God and the future profoundly impressed all of us Americans, Scandinavians, and British who were comparatively safe. The outcome of this week of intimate fellowship was the formation under the clear direction of God of "Embassies of Reconciliation." A panel of men and women are going from country to country throughout the world in unofficial peacemaking. George Lansbury visited nearly all the Prime Ministers of Europe as well as President Roosevelt and Herr Hitler within twelve months. His messages were given in the name of ordinary people like ourselves.

The previous December (1935) in Hong Kong, a cable had reached me from the States asking me to join the National Preaching Mis-

sion. I didn't like the sound of it. I'm not keen on sermons. I cabled back a refusal. A month later in India, letters arrived telling me about the format of the Mission and explaining its program. This sounded good. I liked the idea of a nation-wide movement, ignoring denominational differences and touching every strata of the population. I was allowed to reverse my decision. In October I set out for the U. S. A. and joined the Mission in Montana. It was a stiff bit of discipline at first to speak on a platform with certain of one's colleagues who held contrary views to one's own about nearly everything. But very soon we became a unit. We experienced miracles of grace among ourselves; it accounted for the potency of messages to the daily audiences of twenty to twenty-five thousand.

When it was over, I went down to Mississippi to spend three weeks on the Delta Coöperative Farm where cotton share-croppers, white and coloured, work together in amity. I knew the superintendent, Sam Franklin, well. It was he and his wife who were responsible for Fellowship House in Kyoto, one of the best bits of work I saw in Japan. Even when they had given me hospitality there in 1933, Sam was debating whether he, a Southerner, of farming stock ought not to be tackling the harder problem in his own country. Mississippi depressed me abysmally. The psychological atmosphere reminded me all the time of India.

I was sitting there in winter sunshine on the bottom step of my wooden cabin, cotton-fields stretching illimitably in every direction, when I started this book. I finish it in my one-roomed home in Bow, this last day in May. Life grows richer and richer. Very often I cannot imagine greater joy. Queer but true!

Yet all the time the dead weight of Spain, of Ethiopia, of drugs, of child slaves, of the north-west frontier drags at one, a bearing-down pain. Early in 1918 we were told to trust our fighting forces. Only complete victory could make us safe. The knock-out blow must be administered. When victory came, we were to squeeze Germany "till the pips squeaked." We obeyed our leaders and did that, too. We were to trust the peacemakers at Versailles and all would be well. Some of us suggested forgiveness as the only force that heals old wounds. Punishment, we said, would surely bring revenge later on. But, no,

our leaders emphasized the fact that we were the victors, the enemy wholly at our mercy, her women, too. We must disarm her, dismember her, drain her. Regrettable, perhaps, but necessary to ensure future safety.

Now, eighteen years later an East End child came running out of her house, anxiety writ large on her face. She saw Mary Hughes passing up the narrow street. She'd never seen her before, but fear made her bold. "Please, Miss, can you tell me," she said, "is it true that the Government has enough gas masks for everybody?"

"Yes."

"Enough for all the children?"

"Yes."

"Babies, too?"

"Yes, babies, too."

"I don't see how," persisted the child, "'cos we've got a new baby indoors and I don't think the Government knows."

I can't dismiss this anxious, logical child from my mind as exceptional. She symbolizes the world's children. Childhood robbed of its carefree gaiety—this is the fruit of victory.

I learned something yesterday. Two neighbours, splendid people, were giving up their home which was everything to them, to oblige a brother-in-law who in the past had treated them scurvily. The old Adam in me is nearly always on the spot first, and said, "What a shame! I hate to think of it. Those two dears moving, for him who behaved so abominably!" My informant, surprised at my bitterness, said, quietly: "But that's just the beauty of it. Don't you see?" After she had gone I pondered on her words. They illumined the cross.

> He is the lonely greatness of the world,
>   His eyes are dim;
> His power it is holds up the cross
>   That holds up Him.[1]

Christ could have evaded the issue. He wasn't dominated by the men who killed him. He coöperated with them, cured their hurt, com-

[1] Madeleine Caron Rocke.

forted them, made excuses for them instead of feeling bitterness. It was by His help, His will that they wreaked their will upon Him.

Some of us personally fear Fascist and Nazi persecution. Some of us have experienced their ruthlessness, have had warnings of what imperialist displeasure may mean. We are afraid of being afraid, of giving way, of letting down other people. Brutal people can dominate timid ones. They can wreak their will upon us. But is it really their will? Is it not our own will that puts us into their power? It is by our permission that they do what they like with us. We could have chosen the coward's way, their own way, or the way of sitting on the fence, a popular attitude which appeals to many. It is by our own choice that we have taken a position which puts us into danger. To be one with God is to be in a majority.

In three months I start out again for China, *via* U. S. A. This time I shall not have to work hard in America to earn the money to take me to China and keep me while there. A friend in Shanghai, a Chinese business man and devoted Christian, is paying my expenses.

I feel that those of you who have plodded through all my pages should be congratulated. I wish I had written the book in fewer. Forgive me.

Say a prayer for me in China, and for my neighbours here, the East Londoners, the kindliest and dearest of friends. "Under Heaven, all one family."

APPENDIX I

Memorial Prayer

OUR God, we thank Thee that to Thee there are no barriers between this world and the other, but that, hand in hand, those who have passed on and those who remain may even now in prayer draw near to Thyself and to each other.

We bless Thee that those that rest in Thee, who have passed forward from this world's twilight into the full noontide glory of Thy presence, have evermore immortal joy in Thee.

We thank Thee that they have put on immortal joy, immortal freshness of spirit, immortal and unquenchable love, poured forth freely for ever.

We thank Thee also that we may share with them in their eternal youth, their eternal joy, putting on morning by morning the fresh robes of Thy life within our souls.

APPENDIX II

The Brethren of the Common Table

THE Brethren of the Common Table are men and women who want to share their food and other things with people in need, and if they are themselves in need they are willing to accept help of the same kind from those who give it gladly.

They know that such help is given and received every day among the poor, the despised, and the outcast. They know also that Jesus Christ lived among men as a workingman and a tramp, that he shared all he had with others, and went about doing good to people's bodies as well as to their souls.

He fed multitudes; he helped to provide for the guests at a wedding breakfast; he broke the bread for his companions at their common meals. He looked upon all men and women as children of his own Father, and wished them to ask the Father each day for the daily bread that they were to share together.

Thus he showed his love and his Father's love for men and women. No wonder that the common people heard him gladly. No wonder that the rich and proud were afraid of him, that they felt they must kill him.

They succeeded, and yet they failed; for his death was the crowning manifestation of love.

The Brethren of the Common Table believe that in order to do their part in making the world a better place to live in they must try, with God's help, to share their goods and give themselves as freely as Christ gave and shared.

They will meet in Chapter from time to time, and tell each other what they have and what they need. Some of them will be doing work of ordinary kinds, and some will be going about speaking of the common table and the life of fellowship to any one who will listen.

They will not say who shall or who shall not be allowed to join

them. They hope to be always ready to share whatever they have—be it much or little—with any one who feels a need. They leave everyone free to find out for himself or herself what fellowship and what things he wants, and when a want is made known, they must do their best to satisfy it.